

The Siege of Limerick.

LORENCE D'ARL

THE ROSE OF ST. GERMAINS

OF THE

SIEGE OF AMERICK

James M. Stewart

OF THE

ELLY & COMPANY

174 Baltimore Street

FLORENCE O'NEILL

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OR THE

SIEGE OF AMERICK

BY

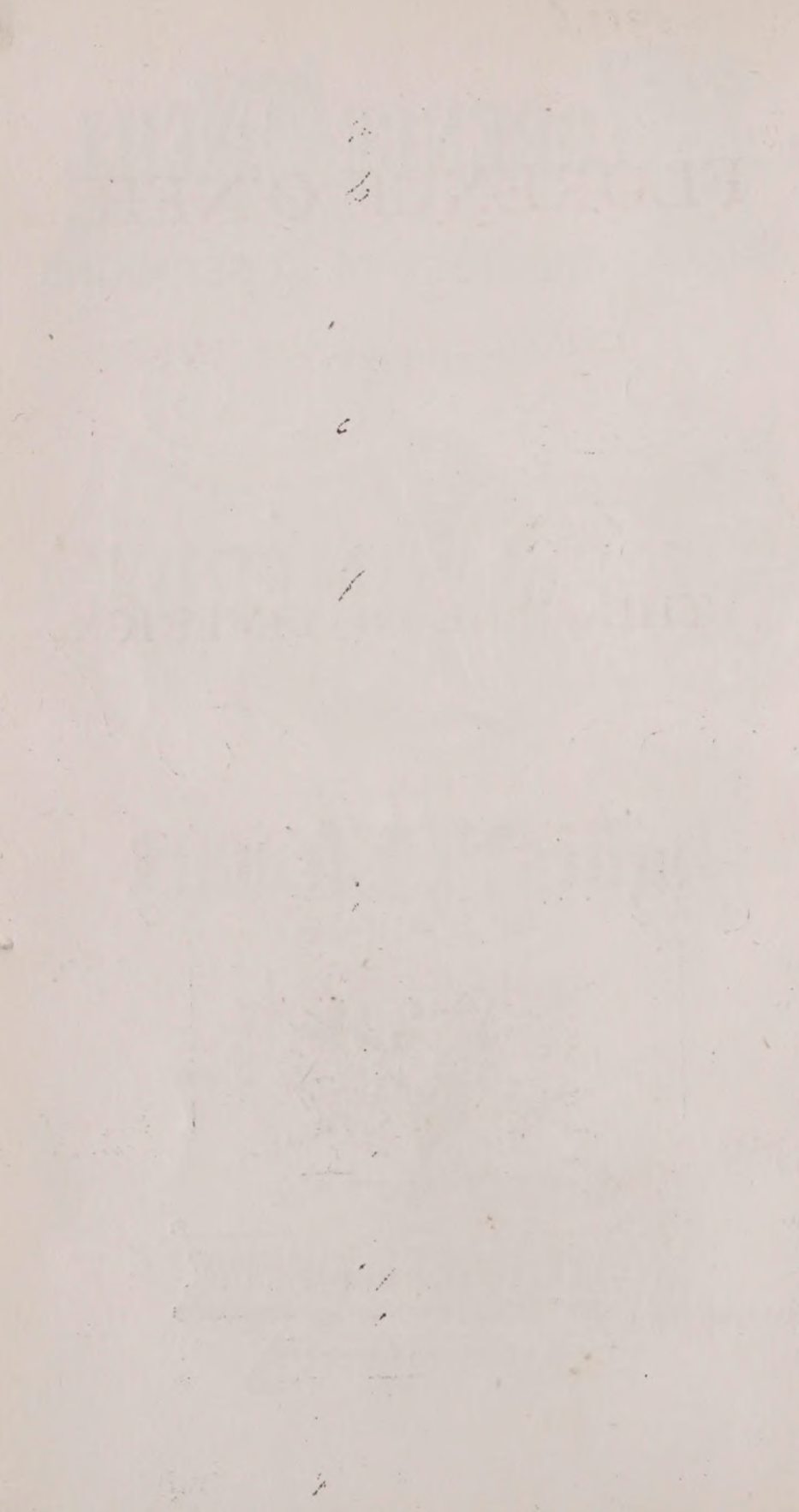
Agnes M. Stewart



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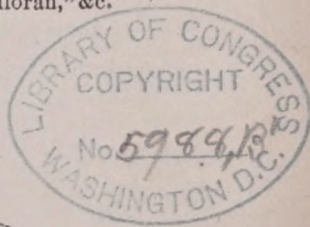
THE ROSE OF ST. GERMAINS;

OR,

THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK.

By AGNES M. STEWART,

Author of "Life in the Cloister," "Grace O'Halloran," &c.



BALTIMORE:
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FLORENCE O'NEILL;

OR,

The Siege of Limerick.

CHAPTER I.

ST. GERMAINS.



ENTLY fell the evening shadows over the fertile valley of the Seine, as on the close of a lovely day in August, in the year 1690, the sun set behind the western hills, shedding a deep roseate tint on the richly wooded prospect, which extended far and wide around the Chateau of St. Germain, the retreat of one of the most unfortunate of English monarchs, the exiled James Stuart, and his good and beautiful queen, Mary Beatrice of Modena. Situated on a gentle eminence, embosomed amidst the umbrageous branches of noble forest trees, arose in all its grandeur the kingly residence which the generosity of *le Grand Monarque*, the courteous Louis of France, had placed at the disposal of the unfortunate James; and the gorgeous rays of that early autumn sunset now play upon its walls, and penetrate within the cabinet of the ex-king, throwing a ruddy tinge on its antique paintings of dark green and gold, and rich and quaintly carved cornices, and shed a halo of light over the little group there assembled.

The king is seated at a small table, his head resting on his hand, his countenance wears the traces of much mental anxiety, for he suffers bitterly in the sorrows and privations of those faithful followers who have given up *all* for him, and he listens sadly and silently to the conversation of two ladies now closeted in the royal cabinet. In the embrasures of a window stands one, tall of stature and delicately formed, and we fail not to recognise, when we look on that delicately oval countenance, with its complexion of exquisite fairness, full black eyes, softened by their long silken lashes, and tresses of the same raven hue, the beautiful Mary of Modena. Beside the queen stands a maiden of some twenty-three years old; she has many personal charms, but the beauty of Florence O'Neill, the orphan *protégé* of the queen, in no way resembles that of her royal mistress.

Florence was but little above the middle height; she was slender of form and fair of complexion, and her deep, violet eyes, shaded by long brown lashes, are bathed in tears. Softly fall the sun's last rays on the golden tresses of the girl, lending a still brighter tint to that richest of woman's ornaments, which, despite the strict rules prescribed by fashion, Florence, like her royal mistress, often suffered, when in the privacy of home, to fall in its rich luxuriance over her shoulders, instead of conforming to the odious practice, then prevalent, of forming a stiff and powdered pyramid of those tresses which Nature surely never meant to be so ill used.

“Nay, then, cheer up, *ma mignonne*,” exclaimed the queen, “and remember this Reginald, who was, you say, the playmate of your childhood, can be no fit mate for you. His family, up to the time of the Commonwealth, were faithful to the royal cause, then, shame upon them, they

abjured their faith, were false to God and to their king, and ever since have paid but poor allegiance to the Stuart rule ; be true to yourself, Florence, and grieve no more for one who has openly joined the forces of the false William of Orange."

" My royal mistress," replied Florence, " it were wrong in me to obtrude my personal griefs in the presence of your majesties, but you will not chide me, when I tell you that to Sir Reginald St. John I owe my life ; not merely do I feel an interest in him because we grew up children together in my early Irish home, but also because, at the imminent peril of his own life, he rushed to save me when I had lost all power to help myself ; my horse had taken fright ; I had given myself up for lost, for it wound its way along the brink of a precipice ; a moment more, and I must have been hurled into the chasm beneath, had he not, at the risk of his own life, and at the cost of a broken arm, thrown himself in the animal's way, and saved me from a frightful death. Ah ! indeed," she continued, " I cannot but feel the deepest friendship for Sir Reginald, *his* is such a *noble soul*, perverted, alas ! by early associations, reared by a fanatical parent, still I am *sure* the day will come when he will bear a sword in the right cause, return to the faith of his fathers, and

" Nonsense, Florence," exclaimed the king, impatiently, " do not speak so tenderly of one who, as the letter you have received informs you, is one of the favorites of my traitorous and perjured nephew, and if what report says be true, is always with him ; you, the daughter of such a faithful veteran as your father was, should not waste a thought upon him ; he is a renegade to his faith, and a traitor to his king. But do not look so sad, my child," added James, rising and placing his hand tenderly on her head, for

Florence knelt as the king approached her, "you must learn to be more of a heroine, and be more courageous under the trials that may await you."

As the king spoke he left the cabinet, and the queen, addressing Florence, said :

"As your uncle wishes you to spend some short time in England, I shall place you under the care of a trusty adherent of ours, who is about to leave St. Germain's, and I shall look for your return before the winter be far advanced." Then ringing a small silver bell, which stood beside her, the queen bid the attendant who answered the summons tell Master Ashton that she wished to speak to him immediately.

Tall and well formed, with a pleasing countenance, was the young Englishman who, a few moments later, entered the cabinet. Devoted to the exiled family, he was about to undertake a most important and perilous mission. With deep reverence he approached the queen, who said :

"The king is about to entrust you, my good Ashton, with a delicate and dangerous mission. He will meet you here in the morning, and place in your care certain papers, to which fictitious names are attached. You will see they are safely delivered to those persons for whom you will be told they are intended. I also entrust to your guardianship this young lady, Florence O'Neill, and you will conduct her in safety to the home of her maternal uncle, Sir Charles de Gray. But tell me, Ashton, have you heard of the repulse that the false William of Orange has met with at Limerick?"

"No, your majesty," said Ashton; this is, indeed, good news."

"We hear, then," said the queen, "that the gallant Sarsfield, with a body of dragoons, passed the Shannon in

the middle of the night, routed the troops that guarded the artillery of our false-hearted son-in-law, disabled the cannon, destroyed the wagons and ammunition, and safely retraced his steps to Limerick. The siege has been vigorously carried, and our loyal Irish subjects have courageously defended their city, and," added the queen, with a flushed and animated countenance, "our enemies have met with such a warm reception that, it is said, 1,200 men have fallen, and William of Orange has been glad to decamp, marching on towards Clonmel, and we have it on good authority that he meditates a speedy return to England. So, Ashton, there is reason for us to look upon matters more hopefully. Many of our warmest friends have risen within the last few weeks throughout England and Ireland; some there are also, even within the traitor's camp, whose hearts are rightfully disposed, and it is to some three or four of these persons, whose names the king will communicate to you, that you must see on your arrival in London. And now, my good friend, I warn you that all the skill and discretion which we know you to possess must be called in action on your arrival at the spot in which his majesty's false daughter holds her court. You have often earnestly begged the king to tax your skill in his services: tell me candidly, Ashton, dare you, now that the time has come in which he may put your talents to account, exert them in his cause, for, oh, my good Ashton," continued Mary Beatrice, inexpressible sadness in the tones of her voice, and tears gathering in her eyes, "I must not hide from you that the mission we trust you with is replete with difficulty and peril."

"Do not fear me, my royal mistress," said Ashton, proudly drawing himself up as he spoke, "I am only rejoiced that the time has at last come in which I can prove

my devotion to the royal cause by deeds as well as words. At last, then, there is an end to inaction, and the day may soon arrive," he continued, laying his hand on his sword, "when my good right arm may wield this blade in his majesty's services. I am ready, if need be, to shed my blood in defence of his rights."

"Well, then, good Ashton," replied the queen, "remember my words. Conduct yourself with prudence, for you are about to go near the court of *Mary, the daughter*, as our Scottish subjects, in the full bitterness of their satire, denominated the false Mary; near *her* there must be much of danger, and it behooves you to be wary and cautious. I shall not be present, my trusty friend, at your interview with the king, so I may probably not see you again, for we wish you to commence your journey speedily, and remember that very early in the winter we expect to see you back, accompanied by my young friend, Florence O'Neill."

"Ah! madam," said the young man, bending his knee, "rest assured I will carefully execute my mission, and some weeks before the festival of Christmas be celebrated at St. Germain's hope to apprise your majesties of a successful rising, and conduct Miss O'Neill in safety back to her royal mistress."

As Ashton spoke he left the cabinet, and the queen, with the air of one who is very weary and ill at ease, threw herself on the chair which James had occupied, and passing her hands caressingly over the golden locks of her favorite, who sat on a low stool at her feet, she murmured, as if unconsciously:

"Yes, we have heard good news, and yet a dread of approaching evil sits heavy at my heart. What if the undutiful Mary and the traitor William triumph in the end? What if in these risings the blood of good and brave and noble men be shed for us, and shed in vain."

“Nay, madam, do not suffer such fears to harass your mind. May not the good news your majesties have heard from Ireland prelude some glorious and effective rising for the royal cause?”

“True, Florence,” replied the queen; “God knows I try to keep up my spirits.” Yet the conduct of Mary Beatrice belied her words, for with somewhat of dismay, she felt, one after another, hot tears falling on her neck as her mistress spoke; indeed, it is well known that the beautiful and unfortunate Mary of Modena was the veriest creature of impulse. It was utterly beyond her power to disguise her feelings, and at no time had she been a match in any way for the unscrupulous and deceitful daughters of James.

Throwing herself on her knees beside the queen, and respectfully raising her hand to her lips, Florence earnestly besought her to keep up her spirits, and become calm and hopeful. It was a scene worthy of the painter’s art. The moon had long risen, and its silvery rays, penetrating into every nook and corner of the cabinet, revealed distinctly the figures of one of the most unfortunate of queens and her kneeling *protégée*. Mary Beatrice bent her head forward and imprinted a kiss on the forehead of her favorite. With a violent effort, striving to conquer her emotion, then, rising, she turned to one of the windows, which lay buried in a deep recess.

Bathed in a flood of silvery light lay the valley of the Seine. At the base of the lofty hill, on which the Chateau of St. Germain rose in all its grandeur, the scene was sublimely beautiful, as in the bright moonlight of the summer night each copse, and glen, and thicket in the vale beneath was revealed to view, whilst in the distance might be descried the towers of St. Denis, frowning, as it were, over the quiet, peaceful scene beneath.


Mary Beatrice for some moments stood musingly gazing on the rich country, spread out like a map beneath the chateau, and her thoughts, spite of herself, recurred to the doubtful future.

Was it merely a vague fear of approaching evil, or had the veil which conceals the future from our gaze been for a moment raised before her eyes, for the ruin of her faithful Ashton, and the downfall of her dearest hopes, had passed as in a vision before the eyes of Mary of Modena; yet, striving to banish from her mind the unpleasant impression it had received, she dismissed Florence, saying, in a hopeful tone:

“Now, good night, Florence, and forget not to pray before going to rest for the success of our enterprise.” Then, ringing the bell, she summoned her attendant, and sought the king, disguising her uneasiness beneath a smiling countenance.

CHAPTER II.

LE GRAND MONARQUE—THE KING'S PROMISE.

N the morrow, Florence received an order to accompany the queen to Marly, at which place Louis XIV at that time held his Court, in fact, it was to this most gallant of monarchs that she owed the appellation of the Rose of St. Germain, by which name she was generally known at the French Court. The courteous king was indeed never insensible to the charms of the softer sex, and the delicate beauty of the Irish maiden, whom we have omitted to mention was distantly related to the brave Tyrconnell, had not failed to make a due impression on the heart of *Le Grand*

Monarque. The mother of the fair Florence was an English lady by birth, had married one of the ancient race of the O'Neill's, and the greater part of the girl's early life had been spent in her father's native land, till some time after his death, which occurred when fighting in the French army under Turenne. Sir Patrick O'Neill had been the bosom friend of the brave Marshal; and thus it was that when Louis beheld Florence for the first time at the little Court of St. Germain's, and her spoken of as the daughter of a deceased friend of his favorite Turenne, he immediately became interested in her welfare. Florence had barely completed her fifth year when her father fell, whilst fighting valiantly beside the Marshal; his lady, a woman of great personal attractions and considerable merit, had been in early youth the friend of Ann Hyde, Duchess of York, and some eight years after her husband's death she repaired to London, and received a post in the household of the then Duchess Mary of Modena, who soon looked upon Lady O'Neill in the light of a favored friend: the health of the latter, however, soon began to decline, and she retired again into the solitude she so deeply loved, passing the greater part of her time in religious exercises, and in the education of her daughter of whom she was passionately fond, and died before Florence had attained her fifteenth year.

Somewhat like herself, impulsive and affectionate, the heart of Mary of Modena turned instinctively to this orphan girl, whom she at once adopted, and whose engaging manners and warmth of disposition, endeared her to all in the noble circle in which she lived, till she became the ornament and admiration of the court. Many suitors, too, had offered themselves for the hand of the fair descendant of the O'Neills, but Mary Beatrice would not sway the feelings

of her *protégée*, so far as to extort a forced compliance with a royal command, though both herself and the king were predetermined never to give their consent to her union with Reginald St. John, with whom she had grown up in the days of her mother's early widowhood.

Indeed, to such an union Florence never could expect her royal protectors to agree, for St. John was a cousin of that stern upholder of the Commonwealth, who had been with Vane, Lambert, and others, actively engaged in sowing the seeds of discord and rebellion against monarchy: the present head of the family, too, was a Protestant, and disaffected towards the exiled James; in fact, Florence could not urge a single point in his favor, and was obliged to own to herself that these were very sufficient reasons why her royal protectors should refuse to sanction her union with Reginald St. John.

But let us return to the story from which I have so long wandered, and accompany the royal party on their way to Marly.

It was very early when they set forth, the autumn morning one of the fairest, and its dews had been quickly dried up by the first rays of the sun which shone cheerily on the chateau, and kissed away its last pearly drops as they rested on each blade of grass and humble floweret in the valley beneath. Despite the misfortunes of the royal pair, there were happy moments still for them to enjoy, and the beauty of the day lent its aid on this occasion to banish from their minds, for a while, the thoughts of their present overwhelming anxieties.

Blithely they rode onward with but few attendants in their train, and ere the day was far advanced they reached the royal retreat of Marly; the approach to this villa palace was by a noble avenue of trees, the park extending to that

of Versailles ; in its tasteful gardens were miniature lakes and graceful fountains, their marble basins filled with gold fish, and glistening with the floating lotus.

The royal party now approached the principal part of the edifice, a spacious, square detached pavilion, near which six smaller ones were grouped around ; light and graceful, indeed, was the construction of the entire building supported by Corinthian columns, between which were paintings in fresco. Each of the four sides of the pavilion was crowned by a portico ; and now ascending to the terrace, James and his train entered one of the four vestibules which served to give ingress to as many suites of apartments on the ground floor, reserved for Louis and the princes of the blood, all of which communicated with the grand saloon, octagonal in its form, having four fire places supported by Ionic pillars, over which were painted figures representing the seasons. Many spacious windows, with gilded balconies and oriels, around which were grouped baskets of flowers supported by Cupids, lighted up this most gorgeous apartment.

Though in about his fiftieth year, in the time of which we write, Louis Quatorze had certainly not lost one iota of that noble gracefulness of mien for which he was so distinguished, his eagle eye was bright as in his youth, and the exquisite simplicity of his attire only added to the elegance of his general demeanor.

He was habited, as was most frequently the case, in a garment of black velvet, relieved by a slight gold embroidery, and fastened by a single gold button ; his under vest was, however, of crimson stuff, elegantly embroidered, but not one single ring or any jewel whatsoever adorned the person of the king, save in his shoe and knee-buckles. Unlike all the former kings of France, he wore his blue ribbon beneath his vest save when on state occasions it was suffered to hang at

full length, embroidered with precious stones, estimated at the immense value of eight millions of money.

Saluting the little party with the dignified and graceful courtesy which so well became him, the handsomest and most majestic prince of his time welcomed to Marly James and Mary Beatrice, then turning to Florence, who as one of her ladies, was privileged to accompany her, he said: "Welcome too, to Marly, fair Rose of St. Germain, and I assure you, young lady, if your cousin James and his royal spouse do not soon find you a husband, I will myself look after your interests, nay, do not blush, for I vow you shall be my *protégée* unless your name of O'Neill, time-honored as it may be, be not quickly changed for another, for remember I never forget your father was the intimate friend of my brave Turenne, and it would please me to see you the wife of some noble of my own Court."

Blushing deeply, the timid Florence stammered out a few words of grateful acknowledgment, intimating at the same time that she had no desire at present to change her state, whilst Mary Beatrice aware of the interest the courtly monarch really felt for Florence, inwardly resolved that, if possible, she should not cross his path again; she had, in fact, no desire to see the innocent and pure-minded Florence become the *protégée* of a king whose unbounded admiration of the female sex, often led him to commit the grossest errors and the gravest faults.

After a while Louis and James retired, the latter wishful to lay open to the French king his views and intentions, making him cognizant of the departure of Ashton to England and confiding to the monarch the names of several distinguished persons in England, who were zealously interesting themselves in his service. But the failure of the late attempt at the Boyne had weakened the hopes of Louis as

to the restoration of the unfortunate James. Had he been able to have received the decisive stroke at the Boyne some few weeks longer, the French fleet would have become masters of St. George's Channel, and could either have conveyed himself and his army to England, or have prevented aid from coming to William; the unfortunate are sure to meet with censure, and whilst many blamed James for hazarding too much, others condemned him for leaving Ireland too soon. By the earnest desire of the queen, Tyrconnell had urged this hasty retreat, she having entreated him at any cost to save the king's person, that the truly unfortunate James was destined a victim of patience by Providence, his friends exercising him equally with his enemies.

Louis was dissatisfied with the line of conduct he had pursued, and probably at the instigation of his ministers he declined to aid another expedition.

James had keenly felt the censures which had been passed upon him; but hope still led him on, and his queen needed no extraneous aid save the prudence and discretion of Ashton, a tried and faithful servant devoted to the interests of the Stuart race, to carry communications from herself and James to the Bishop of Ely, Lord Preston, the Earl of Clarendon and others who were zealously stirring to bring about the restoration. Thus it was, that painful as was the commencement of his conference with Louis, his sanguine nature did not yield, and when it was concluded, and accompanied by the French king, he sought Mary Beatrice, who with her attendants wandered a while in the shady groves of Marly, no trace of discomfiture was visible on his countenance.

Nevertheless Louis was truly noble and generous, his kingly nature had developed itself in his dealings with the exiled monarch, whom he would have rejoiced to have

placed again on the throne, now usurped by the most worthless of daughters and ungrateful of nephews.

Heavy indeed were the misfortunes with which our second James was visited : he might have used with truth the language of our great poet, and exclaimed with King Lear : “ *How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child.*”

The cool and hardened cruelty of Mary, his most favored daughter, stung him to the quick, for she heartlessly appropriated to herself the property of her step-mother, amongst other things a costly cabinet of silver fillagree, and denied even her father's request for his clothes and personal property, a request which, with unparalleled barbarity, the ungrateful Mary refused to comply with. Evelyn relates that she entered Whitehall joyful as if bidden to a wedding feast. Transported with joy, she ran into the closets and examined the beds, her coarse and unfeeling levity revolting the minds even of Bishop Bennett and Lady Churchill, and hurrying to take into her iron grasp the goods which had fallen into her possession.

James had heard, too, that she had ordered that the standards and other spoils taken from him at the Boyne be carried in procession and hung in St. James Chapel.

Whatever may have been *his* faults, he had been to both his daughters the most indulgent of fathers ; *of their* unparalleled wickedness and abandonment of filial duty, no doubt can remain on the minds of posterity.

But return we to our story. Not without an end in view had James sought Louis on the occasion we have spoken of, but he was confident in his expectations of a successful rising, through the unceasing efforts of his friends in England, and so well did he disguise his discomfiture at the result of his interview with the French king, that Mary

Beatrice vainly tried to read in his countenance whether there was any further aid to be expected for the carrying out of their plans.

One short hour more was passed in the enchanting spot which the luxurious monarch had chosen for his retreat when he wished for such solitude as in his high position he could obtain. A rural *fête* had but recently been given, and as no cost was ever spared, trees of considerable size had been transported hither from the forests of Fontainebleau and Compiègne, in order to add, by the rich beauty and luxuriance of their foliage, to the pleasantness of the scene, and a very little later to fade away and give place to others.

This was the first time Florence had visited Marly, and the kingly Louis, who, out of affectionate memory for the good Marshal Turenne, bestowed upon her so much notice, bade her remember that she would ever find a friend in him, adding, ere he bade adieu to the royal exiles, with somewhat of emotion, and an unusual moistening in his eye: "The father of the fair O'Neill fell by the side of my brave Turenne, so bear in mind that if, at any future time, trouble should fall upon you, or you should require some favor granted, which my brother and sister of England may not have it in their power to confer, then forget not that in that hour of need or distress you have permission to seek the aid of Louis of France."

With reverent gratitude, for she thought she might in some way aid her royal mistress through the monarch, Florence raised to her lips the hand of *le Grand Monarque*, and with deep emotion, faltering out her thanks, fell into the little train which had accompanied the royal exiles from St. Germain, and who, having made their adieus to King Louis, prepared to return thither.

CHAPTER III.

MERVILLE GRANGE.



OWARDS the close of a drear October evening two travellers, spent with a long day's toilsome journey, wended their way across a fertile tract of land on the borders of Gloucestershire. The sky was of that heavy leaden hue which betokens a storm, and hollow gusts of wind ever anon swept across their path, carrying with them clouds of dust, while the sere and withered leaves whirled in circling eddies beneath the hoofs of the jaded beasts, who had not, as yet, finished a hard day's work.

The closing in of the late autumn day was, indeed, wild and black enough to authorize the far from causeless fears entertained by the travellers. At the time of which we write, when not only reckless bands were well known to infest the highway, but also some marauding party likely to be encountered on the road, joined to the fearful state of the weather, the prospect of passing a night on the wilds of Gloucestershire was far from pleasing, should the travellers not reach speedily the place of their destination. The younger of the two might, perhaps, have numbered some thirty years. His dress, a garment of simple black velvet, was made in some sort after the fashion of the day, though, at the same time, it retained, somewhat carefully, the excessive simplicity which formed so prominent a character, even in the outward garb, of the Puritans of old and their immediate descendants, betokened him, together with a certain air of nobleness which marked his demeanor, to have come of gentle blood.

His companion, though with a form unbent with age,

might, perhaps, have seen nearly eighty winters ; his hair, white as silver, was combed over his forehead, and the naturally morose expression of his features now wore a sterner expression than usual, from the very fact that his creature comforts had been most cruelly interfered with. This aged man was dressed in a suit of sober brown cloth ; the style of his attire, and his general sanctified demeanor revealing, without a doubt, the fact that Joshua Benson, whose appellation, in his early days, was, " Firm in Faith," was really one of the veritable Puritans of the generation now rapidly passing away.

Sundry exclamations of impatience now broke forth from Benson, as his companion, Sir Reginald St. John, suffered his horse to trot slowly on, while he took a brief survey of the country around him, and wiped away the drops of perspiration which had gathered on his brow, for he had ridden long and rapidly.

" It is a great shame to drag my old bones so far," burst forth the testy old man. " I wonder why you did not put up at the White Bear ; it was a comfortable inn, good enough for jaded man and beast. I shall wonder if the Lord does not punish us for running into danger, ' for, verily, those who love the danger shall perish in it.' Moreover, I have no liking for the place you are going to. I, Firm in Faith Benson, as I used to be called in the good old times, do not like even to enter the house of an ungodly man like this papist, De Gray."

" Nonsense, Benson," replied Sir Reginald, impatiently, notwithstanding the respect he still felt for his former preceptor ; " have I not already told you that I bear Sir Charles a letter from the king ? He has never allied himself to those disaffected to the present government, but always maintained a strictly neutral position. Sir Charles

is immensely rich; he has broad lands in this county of Gloucestershire and in the wilds of Cumberland, and if we can but win him over to join the forces of King William, he will bring many others with him, and may well afford to aid our royal master with purse as well as counsel, and instruct him of much that he ought to know, if all report says be true."

"May be as you say," replied the old man, copying the example of his companion, who set spurs to his horse and galloped briskly onwards. "May be so," he continued, in a tone inaudible to his companion, who was again buried in thought; "but if I had you again in my power, young man, as I had when you were a boy, the Lord knoweth you should never have dared drag me on as you have done this cold, bleak night. I could almost strike you now as in old times," he continued, his always thin, compressed lips more compressed than usual, whilst his hand nervously clutched the bridle of his horse. "If I had power over you now, I would soon see if you should take me to the house of this Papist, but I have borne the Lord's yoke from my youth, and though it is hard the once submissive lad should now be my master, I may live to see him a more worthy disciple yet."

At this moment a sharp turn in the road brought them to a fence, enclosing what, in the fading light of the October evening, rendered still more dim by the thick mist that was now falling, seemed to be a thickly wooded park, whilst between the branches of the fine beech and chesnuts, which lined the avenue, appeared the red brick walls, with copings of freestone, of a fine old mansion, built probably about the Elizabethan era.

An exclamation of gratified surprise burst from the lips of Sir Reginald, as, allowing the reins of his horse to fall

over its neck, he let it canter slowly up the avenue which led to the principal entrance of the mansion, whilst Benson, with sundry exclamations of impatience, followed, moodily, behind his companion.

“At the Grange at last, then,” said Reginald, “for surely this must be Merville, the place I have often heard Lady O’Neill describe, as that in which she spent some time of her widowhood. Ah, yes,” he added, as his horse trotted slowly on, “the description closely tallies, and, after all, I have reached the end of my journey sooner than I expected. There is the noble flight of steps I heard her speak of, with a spacious portico opening to the entrance hall, and, if I do not mistake, the ruddy, glaring light which streams from those narrow windows proceeds from an apartment in which the warmth and refreshment I sorely need may be obtained.”

As he finished his soliloquy he found himself at the bottom of the steps leading to the grand entrance of the mansion, and, dismounting, he rang the heavy bell, the summons being at once answered by the hall porter.

It was in the power of Sir Reginald to procure a speedy audience of the baronet at whose mansion he had introduced himself, by means of a sealed packet which he placed in the hands of the servant, and a moment later he found himself seated with Sir Charles in that same apartment, the windows of which had shone so cheerily without, from the united glow of lamp and firelight, on that chill October night. But Benson and the knight both start alike, though each from different causes, as they enter the spacious dining room of Merville Grange. The former sees the figure of an aged man pass hastily across the room, and disappear behind the tapestry with which the walls are hung, and a strange fancy possesses him that in that hasty, fleeting

glance he has recognized, in the face and form of the venerable ecclesiastic, one of the hunted down priests of Rome whom he had known in other and far distant times, and whom his heart rejoiced to see again, and in England, doubtless acting up to the calling of his office, for was he not in the house of the papist De Gray? The start of Sir Reginald proceeded, however, from a very different cause. As he returned the salutation of Sir Charles, who still held in his hand the missive which the servant had delivered, the dark eyes of Sir Reginald, now unusually animated, fell on the figure of a beautiful girl, who for a moment gazed in surprise and mute astonishment on the new comers; who, indeed, should the zealous adherent of William of Orange behold but his betrothed, the loyal and ardent Florence O'Neill, who would have willingly shed the last drop of her blood in defence of the rights of the Stuart race!

Habited in an evening robe of pale blue silk brocade, the sleeves, according to the fashion of the time, narrow at the shoulders, where they were fastened with loops of ribbon, widening as they descended, and turned up at the cuffs, to show the under sleeves of rich point, the neck, also, heavily trimmed with point. Her single ornament consisted of a necklace of large pearls; her hair, perfectly unadorned, and rebelling against the prevailing fashion, fell negligently over her shoulders. Pale almost as the pearls she wore, now stood the fair O'Neill, gazing in strange bewilderment on Sir Reginald, who thus unexpectedly had crossed her path. For one moment their eyes met in mute surprise, but brief as was that space, it attracted the notice of Sir Charles, on observing which, Sir Reginald, recovering from his astonishment, exclaimed, advancing to Florence:

“Your fair niece, Sir Charles, and my humble self are old friends, or, not to use such a term where Florence is

concerned, I would rather say my betrothed, and tell you, if you are ignorant of our secret, that we spent together much of our early childhood, especially during part of the widowhood of Lady O'Neill, who was my own mother's warmest friend. Delighted, indeed, am I to meet Florence here, for I believed her to be at St. Germain's."

It were hard to say whether Florence was pleased or not to meet with St. John, for the smile that had lighted up her countenance on the recognition that had taken place had so soon faded away. A painful foreboding of impending evil fastened itself upon her heart, in short, that sad feeling which we all experience at times, and are so wont to term presentiment, filled her mind with strange forebodings of coming sorrow. She gazed long and eagerly, scarcely noticing St. John, on the letter in her uncle's hand. The one word of astonishment which Sir Charles had uttered on receiving the carefully folded paper from the hands of the domestic, coupled with the baronet's significant look, and the words "William of Orange," had set all her fears alive as to the cause of the unlooked-for appearance of Sir Reginald. Florence would rather see the wreck of her own dearest hopes than become disloyal, yet the color fled from her cheeks, and scarce returning the greeting of Sir Reginald, she met the warm grasp of his hand with the faint pressure of one as cold as marble, and almost mechanically resumed her seat.

"I will speak to you to-morrow, Sir Reginald, about this matter," said Sir Charles, as he refolded the letter; "we will have no business conversation to-night; you are fatigued and weary, and shall partake of such hospitality as the Grange can furnish. Yours must have been dreary travelling for some hours past, and your aged friend looks, too, as if he sorely needed both rest and refreshment."

Weary enough was Benson; but had the poor baronet been cognizant of all that was passing in the mind of his guest, he would have known that it was the evil passions which filled his mind far more than natural exhaustion, that gave to his countenance that restless, distracted expression. Notwithstanding, he managed to do full justice to the tempting viands placed before him, and demolished with tolerable rapidity a portion of a cold capon, flanked with ham, and a good allowance of venison pasty, with a quantity of fine old wine, which the hospitable baronet had directed to be placed before his guests.

Vain were the efforts of Sir Reginald to induce Florence to throw off the air of cold restraint that hung over her, and he observed, somewhat uneasily, that it was only when he introduced the subject of the Court at St. Germain's that her spirits seemed to recover their wonted tone. For a time it appeared as if she yielded to the indignation she felt, for her eye kindled, and a bright flush suffused her lately pale cheek, when she spoke of Mary Beatrice and the ex-king. Then words of scorn rose to her lips, which she would not repress, as she spoke contemptuously of those worthless ones who had risen on the wreck of their own fathers' fortunes, of her deep, unswerving love of the Stuart race, of her resolution, if needs be, to give up her life's dearest hopes and affections for them, and to shed her blood, if necessary, in their service, and Sir Reginald felt that she for whom he would have given up all he held dear, save his honor, which was pledged to William and Mary, was, *indeed*, lost to him, that his own hopes were levelled with the dust; that drawn together by the holiest bonds of an affection which had grown up between them from childhood, the hand of the high souled kinswoman of the great Tyrconnell, the loyal Florence, never would be given in marriage to himself,

even did her heart break in the rejection she would most assuredly make of all overtures of an alliance. But if St. John was disturbed and uneasy from the cause we have mentioned, not less so was the timorous baronet, who, in the fluctuations of political opinions, had determined to keep himself and his fortune perfectly safe, by maintaining a strictly neutral position. It was in vain that by sundry impatient gestures, and ever and again by an impetuous "pshaw," that he attempted to allay the storm which was rising in the breast of the excitable Florence. In her own heart she ridiculed the timid fears of the old man, though respect for his age and the tie which existed between them, kept her silent where he was concerned. Moreover, Sir Charles had noted what Florence, in her storm of impetuous feeling, had failed to observe: that Benson scarce ever removed his keen, light grey eye from the maiden's countenance; that ever and again an almost basilisk glance darted from beneath those heavy eyelids, varied by a fierce expression of anger, which seemed as if it could scarce restrain itself. Sir Charles was an acute observer; he had failed in his endeavors to silence the incautious Florence, whose imprudence was thus exposing herself and him to danger, and the baronet resolved to put an end to the conversation by commanding a domestic to conduct Sir Reginald and Benson to the apartments destined for their use.

A weird-looking, gloomy chamber was that into which St. John was at length ushered, together with the ex-tutor, after having passed up a spacious stone stair-case with heavy oaken balustrades, and crossed several long corridors with apartments branching off both to right and left: but the cheerful blaze of a bright wood fire which burned in the ample stove gave an appearance of comfort, and the small inner apartment, communicating with that of the knight,

had also been duly attended to. With a feeling of weariness and dissatisfaction, Sir Reginald threw himself into a chair beside the fire, and folding his arms, remained for some time lost in a gloomy reverie, not noticing the observant air of Benson, who desirous of imparting to his companion the good advice he so much needed, now determined to abide by Sir Reginald as closely as in the days of his boyhood.

Do not suppose, however, that St. John put himself willingly under the *surveillance* of Benson, or patiently bore the infliction of his advice : the fact simply was, that he paid him that amount of respect and deference which one is wont to yield to those under whom we have been placed for a series of years, ranging from early youth to mature age. Moreover, Benson, introduced at first by the young knight to the notice of the Dutch king, had rapidly ingratiated himself in the service of the prince, so that the former friend and preceptor was converted, for the time being, into something very like a spy on the actions of Sir Reginald.

It was, indeed, to sound the opinions of the case-seeking, comfort-loving, timorous old baronet, that St. John had been deputed by the king with a gracious message, commanding his presence at Kensington, and, likewise, was bade to express a hope that, in the event of his aid being required, should there be real cause for apprehension of a rising in favor of James, that he would not fail to be ready both with men and money, according as circumstances might require.

William was cognizant of far more of his favorite Reginald's intentions, than the latter was at all aware of, for Benson had apprised the king of his long-cherished attachment for Florence O'Neill ; thus it was then, that the knight was closely watched, for the advancement of a certain purpose in view, had Benson been requested openly by the king to accompany him into Gloucestershire, and his

proud spirit continually chafed under the infliction of the constant presence of one for whom he was fast ceasing to feel the slightest regard.

Long and patiently did Benson regard the man whose disposition he so well knew, and the feeling of whose heart at that moment, he could so clearly read; so deep, however, was the abstraction of the latter in his own melancholy musings, that his attention was at last only roused by a movement purposely made by his companion.

“Are you grieving, man, because the Papist girl with the fair face will not have you; you, the favored friend of our gracious king,” said the fanatic, in harsh, low accents, “what can you be thinking of to seek a mate from such a nest as this? Did I not see to-night, with my own eyes, the Romish priest, Lawson, pass swiftly through the apartment by another door than that at which we entered, and I know he recognized me too, for we were school-mates together before he had anything to do with Rome and her corruptions? That he was once my friend, matters not, for his superstitious creed makes him now my foe. And this fair-faced girl with the mawky blue eyes,” he added, his voice sinking to a whisper, “it is a pity but that the gracious Mary knew not the treasonable things I have heard her say this night, I warrant me the Papist crew at St. Germain’s would stand little chance of beholding her again; but as to you, the favorite of King William, and the beloved son of my adoption, you can surely think of her no more, for the Lord loves not to see his chosen ones wed with the daughters of Belial.”

“Silence, Master Benson,” said Reginald, rising as he spoke, his handsome countenance full of indignation, “remember I am no longer the boy whom you can lecture as your fancy pleases, but a man who does not choose to regard

or listen to offensive speeches ; I tell you there lives not in the Court of Mary and William, a more pure or noble woman than she of whom you dare speak so lightly. Do not presume to mention her name again, and please to keep your fanaticism, do not trouble me with it, nor meddle about affairs with which you have nothing to do."

"Verily," replied Benson, rising and taking a lamp from the table in order to withdraw to the inner apartment destined for his own, "I tell you St. John, you do not know what is for your own good, and in your mad fondness for this girl, treat very ill one who loves you as well as I do ; I fancy you must be aware King William will not long show you his favor if you aim no higher than to win the hand of this girl of a Papist brood, who is devoted soul and body to the miserable and besotted James."

"How dare you presume to taunt me with the interference of the king," exclaimed St. John, his temper now gaining complete mastery over him, "now understand once for all, Joshua Benson, our long friendship ends from this moment if you continue by word or action to presume to interfere with my affairs."

"Well then, dear St. John, pardon me if the love I bear you has made me too zealous, I promise you I will not give you offense again, but at the same time, I shall strive with the Lord earnestly before I seek my rest this night, I will wrestle with Him in prayer, that you may escape the perils which I am certain will fall on you if you dally a moment longer than is requisite in this abode of Satan."

Benson spoke thus as he withdrew from the room, but entering the inner chamber he closed the door, stood for a moment warming his withered hands over the fire, and then said in a low voice : "I cannot help loving the man as I loved the boy ; the evil which I feared years since has come

to pass, and out of the very affection I bear him, I will place a barrier in his way which he will not be able to remove. He would not let me force him when a youth, surely not now; but never fear, I know how to gain my point by other means; once in London I can easily gain speech of the king, and if I do not mistake, all his fine plans will soon end in nothing."

Thus trying to gloss over his villainy under the specious pretence of affection for his benefactor and former pupil, Benson betook himself falling asleep whilst cogitating over the means he should adopt to carry out his schemes.

CHAPTER IV.

TRUE TO PRINCIPLE.



EARLY the next morning, Sir Reginald met his host at the breakfast table, but Florence was not visible, and he easily accounted for her absence, conscious that she must be aware that his visit to the Grange had been made to answer some political purpose or end of the Dutch Monarch. A long and anxious conference it was, which the baronet held with his guest later in the morning in the privacy of his own apartment.

He was a timid, quiet country gentleman, caring not one jot about state affairs, scarcely heeding whether James the Second, or the usurping William sat upon the throne, so that he could but be quiet, and yet he was about to be dragged from his own home to have the questionable honor of an audience with the king, who would not get rid of the

idea that the baronet, leading the life of a country gentleman, had it in his power to be of great service, if he would but conquer that absurd timidity, which he had been told had grown up with him from his youth. The time was come then when it appeared he *must* abandon his seclusion, and though until now, when he was turned sixty years of age, he had never adopted any definite time of action; he was required to do so *instantly*, for his sovereign required the aid of all well-wishers to the present government.

“An honor, i’faith,” he muttered to himself, “it is an honor then I would be very glad to decline accepting; his Majesty will make me pay dearly for it one way or another.

Sir Charles was, however, of a very hesitating disposition, and so in the end, Sir Reginald gained his point, and it was agreed that the baronet should in a very few days leave the the Grange for London, where he would have the audience which the king wished to give him. In the evening, St. John was to take his leave, and as the day wore on he began to entertain some apprehension lest he should not see Florence before his departure.

In this idea, however, he was mistaken, for chance brought that about which solicitation would not have procured. He had missed his way through the interminable galleries of the old house, and instead of returning to the room in which he had at last succeeded in extorting the unwilling consent of the baronet to appear on the scene of public life, he entered the library, the door of which stood ajar. Florence was seated at a table, unmindful of his presence, till he stood beside her, and extending his hand, he exclaimed:

“Dearest Florence, have I offended you beyond forgiveness? Is that loyalty a virtue in you, and a sin in me?

Grant me, at least, a hearing before we part, and say may I not be allowed to feel some attachment for the king whose very name displeases you, even as you feel love for James Stuart and Mary of Modena? Do not shrink from me, Florence," he added, as with averted head she gazed abstractedly out on the scene beyond the Grange, "but do believe me, my betrothed one, William of Orange is not so vilely bad, James Stuart not so impeccable as you consider them to be."

"I beg you, sir, not to offend my ears by your pleadings for this Dutch usurper," said Florence, with an expression of sorrow on her features. "In my eyes it is rank heresy to pollute the name of the lawful King of England by mentioning it with that of his traitorous and usurping nephew. Oh, Reginald," she added, in a tone of mingled softness and sorrow, "you know not *how* I grieve that *you* should have bound yourself to the service of this man, and if you remind me of our betrothal, sanctioned years since by my departed mother, say if you think that those to whom I owe all I possess, those in whose service my kinsfolk have fought and died, and for whom I, too, would peril my own life, can you, for one moment, think, dear Reginald, that I could ever hope to win their consent to our union?"

The last words were spoken in a tone of inexpressible sadness. That short word of endearment, too, almost unconsciously used, encouraged St. John, and he replied:

"We do not need the consent of the ex-king, or his consent to our nuptials, my Florence. William and Mary will prove to us friends equally as dear, and will grace our bridal with their presence. Your uncle, too, will not frown upon our union, for by the end of the week he will be admitted to the favor of an audience with the king on affairs connected with the State."

For one moment Florence was silent; the tear of human tenderness, the tribute to the weakness of woman's nature, which a moment since had trembled in her eye, was proudly dashed aside, and she exclaimed:

"Reginald, are you playing with the fears of my woman's heart, or are you speaking in earnest? My uncle, timid as he is, is *still* true to the Stuart cause, though he has persistently held aloof from mixing in any political cabal. Surely your errand here has not been to lead him from his allegiance. Have you spoken the truth, Reginald?"

"I have spoken the simple truth, and rejoiced that the good baronet yielded, because I regarded the idea of his adhesion to William's government as an incentive to induce my beloved Florence to cast away her prejudices."

"You are bold as well as insolent," said Florence, bitterly. "Do you think this a seemly way to win my consent to our union? You do not know me, I think, but understand that yonder sun is about as likely to fall from the heavens as I to unite my fate with that of so devoted an adherent of the Dutch king. No, not a word more," she added, wrenching her hand from his grasp, "my heart may break at witnessing the mistaken prejudices, harbored under the name of loyalty, of those I love, but never shall it forswear, whatever be its struggles, its allegiance to the Stuarts."

As she spoke these words she rushed out of the room, and hurrying to her own chamber, wept long and bitterly over the defection of her uncle, and the mistaken line of conduct pursued by Reginald, to whom the whole wealth of her affections had long been devoted; nor did she leave her room till she had seen Sir Reginald and the fanatical Benson gallop down the avenue leading from the Grange. Then, with tears in her eyes, she sought her apartment, the secret of admission to which was known only to herself and Sir Charles de Gray.

Florence had turned her steps to an almost uninhabited wing of the mansion, and entering a small ante-room, to which she obtained admission by a pass-key which she kept in her possession, she entered a spacious apartment, which had not been tenanted for a long series of years. Its antique oaken furniture, with cushions of Utrecht velvet, was covered with dust; spiders had woven their webs in every nook and corner of the room, and the tapestry hangings were in many places falling to pieces.

Advancing to the further extremity of the room, she raised the tapestry, and pressing her finger on a spring which lay concealed in the wall, the panel flew back, and disclosed a recess large enough to allow of a person passing through in a stooping posture. This was, in fact, one of those places of concealment known by the name of "priests' hiding holes," and which are still to be found in many of our old mansions.

Florence then passed through the aperture, and making her way through a passage built in the wall, at the end of which was a small arched door, she tapped gently for admittance, and was answered by the mild *Benedicite* of the good Father, who, concealed a captive, had remained within since the arrival of Sir Reginald and Benson.

Commanding as to personal appearance, and the qualities of his mind as noble as the expression of his countenance, Father Lawson received with a smile the intelligence of Florence that the Grange was now free of its visitants, and that the baronet wished the society of the good Father that evening.

"I fear, Florence," said the priest, "that evil will come of the visit of Benson, for, unfortunately, he caught a glimpse of me the night of his arrival. I did not like his manner when we last met. You have heard me speak of

the man. He was not always the fanatic which he has become for some years past. In our youth, and before my own conversion to the Catholic faith, we were college mates together, and though, even then, he had a tinge of moroseness in his character, no one would have imagined he would have become one of the most fanatical of men. I fancy it was first adopted to ingratiate himself with Sir Reginald's father, whose preceptor he, unhappily, became, much to the horror and distress of the worthy Lady St. John, who was far from an illiberal woman in her religious views. However, my child, the narrow mind of Benson has never forgiven me the step I took in joining the Church of Rome; and I am positive that if he can bring me into trouble he will not hesitate to do so. In order, therefore, not to be the cause of anxiety to Sir Charles, I shall, for a short time, leave this place and go to the metropolis, for I am quite sure the recognition was mutual on the part of Benson as well as my own."

When the priest had concluded, Florence acquainted him with the story of her own trouble, touching lightly, however, on the portion of her story relating to Sir Reginald, but dwelling bitterly on her uncle's contemplated defection. The Jesuit, however, knew the history of her betrothal, and he warned and exhorted her against the evil that would infallibly attend her nuptials should she become the wife of one now the avowed favorite of William. "You must suffer with others, my child," said he, "for our lot is cast in troublous times. There is nothing to be done but to wait, and watch, and pray lovingly and trustingly that, in God's own good time, if He seeth fit, these clouds may pass away, and, as far as you are yourself concerned, that Reginald, to whom you are betrothed, may become wise in time, and cast away his allegiance to the usurper, for fealty to his

exiled king. As to the news about your uncle, I, indeed, grieve to hear such tidings, wondering that William of Orange can lure him from his life of peaceful indolence, now to him a second nature from the mere force of habit, to the busy scenes of public life. But we shall see, Florence," he continued; "we can, as I have just told you, only watch and pray."

Then giving her his blessing, the good Father, ever her comforter and adviser in the time of trial, bade her farewell, and gliding through the long passages and open apertures, she replaced the panel and hastened to the library, in which, as she expected, she found her uncle seated, clad in a robe of pale green brocade, made in the simplest manner. Florence looked exquisitely lovely. She needed no extraneous aid to add to the charms with which nature had endowed her, and advancing to the old man's seat, even before he was aware of her approach, her golden hair had waved upon his withered cheeks, and a tear fell on the forehead she reverently kissed.

"Why, Florence, my child, what ails you?" said the baronet, drawing her to his side. "Why are you in tears? Do you know I am going to London? Cheer up now, or I promise I will not please you by showing you the great city during the few weeks that will pass before you go back to France."

"Alas! it is that very journey that grieves me, for I have ascertained the cause that brought Reginald hither. Think twice, uncle, before you take this step."

"I *have* thought about it, Florence, and my word is pledged to meet the king. Do not look. I will call him the Dutch usurper then, as that is the term you like best, my loyal one. But, look you, Florence, because I have an audience with William of Orange, I do not, for this reason, forswear my fealty to King James."

“It is, uncle, a tampering with honor that is not strictly honorable,” said Florence, “and may lead to great dissatisfaction in the usurper’s cause, when all your life you have been inactive for your lawful kings. How can I tell my royal master at St. Germain’s that my own uncle has acted thus?”

“Silence, Florence,” said the old man, in a playful voice, yet half annoyed at the pertinacity with which Florence pressed her point; “I will give you no cause for shame. And, now, I have a question to put to you. If you feel my acquiescence with William’s wishes for an audience, which I could not well excuse myself from, as kings’ requests are akin to commands, you simple one, then how do you like the knowledge that your future husband is the favorite of the Dutchman, as you scornfully call him? He left me full of sorrow at your anger towards him, and begged me to intercede in his behalf.”

“Let him win my love by deserting the court of the usurper,” said Florence, a bright glow of indignation mantling her cheek. “My heart may break under the trial, but I will never marry St. John, while he is the sworn friend and favorite of William of Orange; and as far as you are concerned, my dear uncle, I shall see you enter the precincts of that hateful court with dread and abhorrence, lest unlooked-for evil may befall you. When we are in London I shall count the days till I leave for France.”

“We begin our journey to-morrow, Florence; when we meet next try and put a brighter face on things,” said Sir Charles, who then left the room, anxious to close the conversation.

For a few moments Florence stood in a musing attitude, then she exclaimed, with a smile on her face, “Yes, it may be as well, for in London I, too, shall have my part to play; I will see Ashton, and who knows, weak as I am, I may have it in my power to aid my royal mistress.”

CHAPTER V.

THE CONSPIRACY.



HE shades of the early December evening were fast deepening into night, and a misty rain, which had been falling for several hours, had now resolved itself into a determined heavy shower, gradually emptying the streets in the neighborhood of Covent Garden of the few wayfarers whom business or other needful occupation drove from the shelter of their homes, to encounter the miseries of the inclement weather. Closely veiled, and her form shrouded in the heavy folds of a dark mantle, a lady passed rapidly along, accompanied by a young man, whose dress and bearing betokened him to be of the middle class. His hat was drawn low over his forehead, evidently with a wish to shun observation, and with a swift step, his companion leaning on his arm, these two persons emerged from the friendly shelter afforded by the garden wall of the Earl of Bedford's mansion.

The house in question was a wooden building, erected on the site now occupied by the lower end of Southampton street, and the garden traversed that very spot where the southern row of the buildings of Covent Garden is now situated.

"Have we got far to walk, my good friend," said Florence, who, accompanied by Ashton, had on this evening left her uncle's house, in the village of Kensington, thus involving herself in the perilous enterprise entrusted to Ashton.

"We are watched," she whispered, before he had time to reply, as she observed a man, evidently disguised, accom-

panied by another whose features she well knew, now standing beneath an archway on the opposite side of the road. "I have heard distinctly," she continued, in a whisper, "the sound of footsteps following our own for some time past. Tell me, Ashton, are we near your home?"

"Be not alarmed, dear lady," said Ashton, in a voice as low as her own; "a few moments more, and I shall have the pleasure of seeing you safely lodged."

Almost immediately, indeed, a turn in the road brought them in front of the house occupied by Ashton's family, and glancing warily round he perceived, not without sharing in the uneasiness of his companion, that the persons we have alluded to were evidently still on the watch, they having left the archway in which they had concealed themselves.

By means of a pass-key Ashton introduced his companion within the house. Their arrival, however, had been expected, for as he closed the door, a young and pretty woman, her countenance bearing traces of intense anxiety, as also of joy at seeing him again, welcomed his return. Then turning to Florence, she said:

"I fear, Madam, you have suffered much during your long and hasty walk this inclement night. Let me at once afford you all the assistance in my power."

Then, accompanied by Ashton, she led Florence to a small parlor on the ground floor, the genial warmth of which afforded a pleasant contrast to the inclement weather she had recently braved. A huge log of wood hissed and crackled cheerily, as it lay in the large fire-place, beside which Florence beheld herself quickly installed, whilst on a table, in the centre of the room, a snow white cloth was spread, covered with several dainties, not the least substantial of which was a huge venison pasty. Covers were placed for six persons, and Florence was cogitating already

as to who the other visitants might be, when a low tap was heard at the window. Ashton immediately rose, and, advancing gently to the door, admitted two gentlemen, in one of whom Florence recognized a disaffected noble attached to the court of William, but whom she was aware, from a conversation she had heard between himself and her uncle, was playing an active part in the efforts now being made to re-establish James on the throne of Great Britain.

This nobleman, in whom the reader will recognize Preston, who played so conspicuous a part in a plot which involved some of the best and bravest of the nobility, as also not a few of the most estimable of the clergy, was accompanied by a gentleman named Elliot, to whom Florence was a stranger. Then drawing near, Lord Preston said to her, in a tone of surprise :

“ My dear young lady, is Sir Charles aware of your presence among us ? He has become almost a favorite with the king, and I should not think would approve of his niece joining our ranks ; but if, as Ashton informs me, you have sufficient courage, we shall duly value the accession.”

“ I am not likely to lack courage in the cause of our gracious king and queen,” said Florence, “ and have already told Master Ashton, who escorted me to England by her Majesty’s command, that I am willing to lend my help in any way in which it may be made useful.”

Ashton then begged his guests to partake of the substantial fare his hospitality had provided, and drawing round the table, they did ample justice to the viands before them, conversing meanwhile, in an undertone, of the attempt about to be made in favor of King James. A heavy gloom, however, hung over the spirits of poor Mrs. Ashton. Her attempt to smile, when rallied by her guests, was perfectly ludicrous, and more than once Florence observed she was in

tears, and on her husband bidding her keep up her spirits, she replied :

“ A deadly apprehension of approaching evil rests upon me ; I cannot shake it off.”

Somewhat hastily, Ashton replied :

“ Repress such foolish forebodings, Janet. As for us, who have the work to perform, it is essentially necessary to set about it in a hopeful state of mind.”

The cloth then removed by an elderly maid servant, too deaf to listen to their conversation, even if she had had the will to betray them, the real business of the evening commenced—that business which had brought together, in such close converse, the noble and the esquire, the simple Ashton and the high-bred Florence, with his wife Janet, formerly the richly dowered and handsome daughter of the wealthy citizen and craftsman, Richard Dawson.

“ Now that we have at last met, my lord,” exclaimed Ashton, “ let us decide as to what will be the best course for us to pursue. In less than a month Christmas will be at hand, before which time we must be out of England. Mistress Florence, also, must again be at St. Germain's, and if we defer any longer we shall find it impossible to dare the hazardous stake we have to play.”

“ And what plan would you adopt ?” asked Lord Preston. “ How can we best arrange, in secrecy and silence, to convey to those who languish at St. Germain's news from friends devoted to their interests ? I marvel, Ashton, if even your ready wit has yet seen the way by which we can effect our object. I fancy you have thought the matter more easy than we may chance to find it.”

“ Ah, my lord,” replied the brave and gallant Ashton, with a sigh, “ trust me ; love and loyalty know nought of obstacles, or if prudence demands caution and care in their

dealings with those around them, still they pass on fearlessly to their work. Do not let us grow depressed at the very outset, my lord, for, as I just warned my wife, it will most effectually prevent our success."

As Ashton spoke, Florence noted the sigh which accompanied his words, and observed a scarcely perceptible flush mantle the cheek of Lord Preston; she knew it to be the flush of rising vexation of spirit, at the contrast which the bold, enthusiastic daring of the intrepid Ashton presented, to his own vacillating humor. A shade, too, had passed over Ashton's features, and a something of fear possessed him as to whether the noble lord was an instrument quite fitting for himself and those whose interests he had at heart, to deal with; and it may even be, that with that sigh came a sad foreboding of impending evil, and he could not but look with contempt on this nobleman, who having put his hand to the plough, was yet half-minded to look back and retrace his steps. Ah, could he have seen the sad future which loomed so darkly over and around, could he have foreseen that his own head would fall, and the ignoble peer be saved, as the page of history shows, and saved, not because more innocent than Ashton, for in the sight of the ruling powers each was alike guilty, but merely because, coward like, he screened himself from the punishment he had equally merited, by disclosing all the windings and ramifications of a plot, which compromised not only persons of rank and consideration in England, but also in Scotland! But Ashton's vigorous mind *had* planned things much more cleverly than Lord Preston surmised, for he had said truly that where either woe or loyalty are concerned, obstacles are only thought of as things that must be overcome, and he then narrated how through a person named Burdett, with whom he had become acquainted, he was about to be intro-

duced to a woman whose husband possessed a smack which would carry over to France his lordship, Ashton himself, Florence, Mr. Elliott, and if required, also any other persons who might wish to join them.

“I shall offer,” continued Ashton, “100 guineas, for the amount of money to be agreed on shall not be an object, and if I do not meet the master of the vessel at Burdett’s house, we have arranged to appoint an evening to see him at the Wonder Tavern on Ludgate Hill, and I hope, my lord,” he added, “to be able to set sail at the latest, early in December. These are my present arrangements,” he added, “and as your lordship has honored my poor house so far as to make it the place of our meeting to-night, I shall be glad to know if these, perhaps, still undigested plans meet your approval; for if they satisfy your lordship, they will also have the kindly favor of those in whose behalf you have come here to-night.”

“Really, Ashton, I do not see you could have arranged better,” replied Lord Preston, “and now, gentle lady,” he continued, turning to Florence, “will you let me know at what time you intend to seek the presence of Queen Mary? Your worthy uncle,” he added, “has so easily fallen into the toils spread for him by the flatteries of William, that the task of introduction will not be a difficult one, but trust me, you may as soon think of turning the lion’s whelps as softening the queen’s heart, if such should be your idea. Indeed, putting aside Mary’s own evil inclinations, has not her husband made it his study since the fatal day on which King Charles decreed that she should become the bride of the then Prince of Orange; has it not, I say, been his constant effort to steel her heart against every natural emotion of filial love, to deny in her presence all that she has been taught to consider holy, for his own vile purposes, to make

her utterly unmindful of house and home affections? Ay!" continued Lord Preston, now carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, and by his dislike of William III, so as to forget the minor considerations of self love or self and self preservation by which he was generally distinguished, "have I not myself heard him dare to speak disparagingly of her royal father even when in public, and revile all that she was ever taught to love."

Florence, as Lord Preston spoke thus, remembered also a certain speech which was said on good authority to have been uttered by Mary; for when the unfortunate James wrote after his coronation, reproaching her for having suffered this ceremony to have been performed whilst himself and the Prince of Wales lived, William vindicated himself declaring that he had done nothing but by her advice, when this most dutiful of daughters replied with irritation, that if her father regained his authority, her husband might thank himself, *for letting him go as he did.*

Florence was aware that from this hour, James always believed that his daughter wished some cruelty to be perpetrated against him, and whilst she pondered over this remark, she thought, and perhaps not incorrectly, that where there was so much evil of natural growth, there could not be much required in the way of prompting by others, but be it as it may, Florence had resolved on finding her way to the presence of Mary, hoping to be able in some way or another, though at present she knew not how, to be of use to the exiles at St. Germain. Then to her amazement, names were mentioned of persons whom she had little deemed were averse to the rule of William and Mary, the Bishop of Ely, Clarendon, the queen's uncle and many other persons of consideration and note, were alluded to as being concerned in the meditated conspiracy. And still

conversing, they after a short time, gradually arranged the line of action to be pursued with regard to the journey to France, they had some time meditated, for in Louis XIV all their hopes were founded, and without him there could be no good effected.

And in the cause of royalty, Florence had her part to play, and it was one beset, too, with difficulties; none other in fact, than to be introduced through the means of Lord Preston and her uncle, to the presence of Mary, and once within the precincts of the court, to watch and note all that passed around her, to be the medium for conveying letters, written in ciphers, to and from the disaffected nobles who dwelt around the court, receiving from them in return missives, which would hereafter be conveyed to France as soon as their plans were fully mastered. Not till a late hour of the night did the party break up, Florence being escorted to a sleeping apartment prepared for her reception by Mistress Ashton, who as soon as they were alone, exclaimed, bursting into tears:

“My mind, dear madam, is tormented with fear and anxiety, one constant thought torments me, it is that this rising will be discovered, and my husband fall a victim to the fury of the queen.”

With many gentle words Florence strove to allay her apprehensions, but her efforts were for some time in vain, and she felt no small relief when, after Mistress Ashton had insisted on her own maid discharging for her the duties of the toilette, weary and fatigued she laid her head on receiving an assurance from her still weeping friend, that she would not fail to have her aroused in time to insure her return to Kensington, before Sir Charles by missing her from the breakfast should be aware that she had been from home.

We must now look back into the courts of the last two months, taking up the thread of our narrative, from the moment at which Sir Charles resolved on visiting London in company with his niece.

A wearisome time indeed succeeded that which would elapse ere Florence could hope to return to France, and the days of her sojourn in London promised little else than restraint of spirit, unless her busy and ever active mind could be in any way engaged by taking part in the conspiracy which was being so diligently hatched against the present possessor of the English crown.

Again, too, every effort was made by Florence to prevent a hindrance to any future meetings with St. John, unless she was previously made aware that he had become a convert even to the political opinions of her somewhat imperious self.

Then too, came a new torment in the person of the once timorous old baronet, who now appeared to the excitable Florence, full of an unholy exultation at the thought of his approaching presentation to William; indeed, had he at once pledged himself to the prince of darkness himself, we question if this enthusiastic adherent of the Stuart race would have been more shocked.

In the village of Kensington, then in the palace of which place William and Mary at that time held their court, the baronet had deputed Sir Reginald to hire for his use, a somewhat handsome residence; and flattered in his old age by the idea of notice even from usurped royalty, though he had never cared to receive or court its favor in the days of his youth and strength, Sir Charles really appeared as if he was meditating undoing the work of his whole life, during which he had lived entirely aloof from any interference with politics.

But the case was altered now, and fluttered about the old baronet a coterie of persons favored at the Court of the Dutch monarch, anxious to make a proselyte, and entangle in their meshes, the hitherto inflexible old Papist. Amongst their hangers-on at the court, was a favorite page of the king, named Walter Harding. As to personal appearance few men of his time could compete with him; his soubriquet was "the handsome page," and none stood higher in the favor of William than did this youth, who was also well known to and an intimate acquaintance of Reginald St. John; of him we shall have cause to speak later.

It was with feelings of mingled alarm and indignation, that Forence beheld the foolish old baronet fall unresistingly and readily into the hands of the court parasites, who all had a keen eye to the influence he possessed as well as to the broad acres in the respective counties of Cumberland and Gloucestershire of which he was the master, and she witnessed the time approaching for his presentation at Kensington with absolute horror; meanwhile, her mind was harrassed at the thought of the distress which her friends at the Court of St. Germain's would experience at the lapse of time which must pass before that originally intended for her return. And she well knew the agony of apprehension that Mary of Modena would endure did she not return at the appointed time. However there was nothing to be done but wait with patience, and with this resolve she endeavored to watch calmly the present demeanor of her fickle old uncle and his future behavior, and also to strive by his means to procure admission to the English Court.

CHAPTER VI.

SARSFIELD, LORD LUCAN.



HE clocks in the good city of Limerick had proclaimed the first hour of a new day, and, save the occasional bark of a dog, or the pattering of the rain, mingled with the faint sighing of the breeze, all was hushed in profound silence.

Yet there were two watchers in one of the upper chambers of a house just without the walls, and they appeared to be buried in profound meditation. The room was simply, nay, scantily furnished ; in fact, it contained nothing save two or three chairs, a mean looking truckle bedstead, on which was a mattress and a few blankets, a table, bearing the remains of a humble repast, and a chest of walnut-wood drawers at the farther end of the room, on which were placed a sword, belt, cap, and other accoutrements, declaring the profession of the inmate of that humble room to be that of arms.

Pacing the room, with a disturbed air, was a lady, whose age it were, perhaps, not easy to guess, for, to a certain freshness of complexion, and with hair whose rich brown reeked not of one silvery thread, there was that unmistakable maturity of form which may belong to a woman of some forty or forty-five years of age, together with those unmistakable lines on the brow which we call furrows, placed on the smooth forehead of woman by care and anxiety if not by the hand of time.

Seated beside the fire sits a man in the military undress of an officer, and with one hand shading his eyes from the bright glare of the lamp, he holds with the other an open letter, which he peruses with care and attention.

This man was no other than Ireland's hero, the brave and gallant veteran, Sarsfield, Lord Lucan.

"Take heart, Catherine," he exclaimed, addressing the lady, "you may, perhaps, be indulging unnecessary fear. Madcap as she is, I think Florence has yet enough prudence to take care of herself. I do not like, any more than you do, this meditated encounter with Mary, but you have owned that this man, Layton, who has introduced himself to you, is an entire stranger, so that I do not see why you should place such implicit faith in his word."

"I cannot doubt the truth of what he has told me," said Miss O'Neill; "he has shown himself too well acquainted with the affairs of my family to permit of my doing so. He evidently knows Sir Charles personally, spoke of Father Lawson, described the old Grange in Gloucestershire, where he had met the good Father, in company with that Sir Reginald, to whom Florence was long since betrothed. He also said that she had been seen in company with Ashton, one of the gentlemen attached to the household of Mary Beatrice, who, it is known, has but recently come from France, and is striving hard to return thither."

"Well, the story, certainly, is a strange one," answered the General, musingly; so strange that really I should like to see the man. If anything be amiss I may be able to detect it. At all events I shall not return to my quarters till to-morrow night, and as you say he intends to call on you to-morrow, I will take care to see him, but we must still remember that Florence is possessed of more judgment and penetration than many of her sex. Depend on it, she will not involve herself without due precaution in the intended rising. For myself, I much like the news contained in the letter now before me," continued Sarsfield; "it gives me to understand that we may expect Tyrconnell

early next month, when our poor soldiers will again have an opportunity to show their intrepidity. And now," he added, "I think you and myself had best betake ourselves to rest, and do not make yourself uneasy about Florence. Rest assured all is right as far as she is concerned. I believe her far too prudent to tempt danger."

Silent, though far from feeling convinced, Catherine O'Neill, the paternal aunt of Florence, retired to her room, not to sleep, but to muse over the fortunes of her orphan niece, and the perturbed state of public affairs, which at that time invested the city of Limerick with so much interest, and has since claimed for it and its gallant defenders so great an amount of *prestige* through succeeding ages.

Early in the morning the General met his cousin, Miss O'Neill, at breakfast. He had for a few days become her visitor on one condition alone, viz: that all ceremony should be foregone, and the poorest and simplest room in the house fitted up for his use, with a mattress for his bed and plain diet for his table; and his mind was intent on the contents of the letter he had received the night before, when a servant, entering the room, announced the arrival of Mr. Layton.

At the same moment the sound of many voices, as of persons clamoring for admission, broke upon their ears, accompanied by the footsteps of a large concourse of people, then a peal of deafening knocks sounded at the door, and tumultuous cries of *Bring out the Saxon spy! Down with the traitor!* reverberated on the air. Scarce one moment had elapsed between the entrance of the servant announcing the arrival of Layton and the utterance of the shouts and cries which now met their astonished ears, and the acute General immediately divined that in some way their stranger visitant had to do with the fearful disturbance without.

Accordingly he bent a searching gaze on the man who stood before him trembling with fear, scarce able to speak from excessive agitation, his light grey eyes sinking beneath the eagle glance of Sarsfield, who seemed to be asking himself where he had met the person whose features he perfectly well remembered, but whose identity was rendered difficult to establish, in consequence of the man of well nigh four score years having adopted the disguise of one of forty; for our old friend Benson stands face to face with Sarsfield, no longer with his own silvery locks, combed straight over his forehead, and in the sober suit of dark cloth it was his custom to wear, but with his head adorned with a brown wig, his garments of the newest cut and fashion, and gay material to boot, and the whole man so strangely metamorphosed that no wonder the brave General failed to recognize Benson in him, the fanatic Benson whom he had known in earlier days, and sincerely regretted that the training of the youth St. John had been entrusted to his care.

But two ringleaders of the mob without clamored loudly for admittance. Their voices were recognized by the General, and, acting on a sudden impulse, he gave orders that the door should be opened, and these persons admitted.

But Sarsfield, as he passed through the hall, had been seen at the open door; it was no longer a question of admission of two persons, for, pushing forcibly by the affrighted servant, a tumultuous crowd rushed in, shrieking out:

“Och, and is it yourself, Ginerall dear? Give us up the cowardly spalpeen, the black divil of a Saxon; let us have the bluid of the thraitor sure, and is it from the camp of the inimy he comes?” were a few of the string of epithets which rung in the ears of the General and his cousin.

“Silence, silence, my friends,” exclaimed Sarsfield, and

he gesticulated with all his force to secure the attention of the infuriated mob, for the greater part of the inhabitants of the city of Limerick seemed to be thronging to the quarter in which his cousin's house was situated; and having taken care to commit Benson to the custody of two stout serving men, he said:

“We must be just, and, before we punish, see in what the prisoner is guilty. Now then, speak; how has this man offended?” he added, in a loud voice, addressing the ringleaders of the unruly mob.

Denis McCarthy, a tall, muscular man, attired as a private soldier, now stepped forward, saying:

“Arrah, yer honor, thin the rale fact is this. Yonder spalpeen has just come from Derry, where he has a dale of frinds I’m afther bein’ tould. My brother Barney knew him in London, yer honor, and sure that is why we know him, for a thraitor its thrue that he is, thin. Gineral dear, make him take off his wig, and a white headed old fellow ye’ll see.”

Sarsfield found it no very easy matter to make himself heard in reply to this not very clear speech of McCarthy’s, for more than twenty voices at once exclaimed:

“Whisht, yer honor, sure and he’s afther mischief, the false Saxon that he is, faix. He knows a power of things, and that a good priest from England is in this house. The spalpeen and spy, dog that he is, is afther seeing the Father, and thin sure and its aisy to know what he’d be afther doing later, and afther he’s done mischief for the Father, thin he can still do a mighty purty business of his own respecting a relation of Miss O’Neill’s herself.”

“What have you to say, villainous spy,” said the General, darting on him a look of mingled indignation and contempt. “What have you to say in your defence, you

wretched spy? What reason can you give why we should'n't hang you up like a dog, as you are, on the Limerick gallows before the sun has set? How dare you presume to come here to carry on your treasonable practices? Hark ye, boys," he continued, addressing Denis and another, who appeared to have acted the part of ringleaders, "I will hear what punishment you each decree, and then decide which he shall undergo."

"Arrah, thin, Gíneral dear," said Denis, who, by the way, I should have said, was the General's servant when in his quarters, "sure and I'm afther asking yer honor to let me do him one little service before we are afther punishing him."

"With all my heart, Denis, I put him entirely in your hands," said Sarsfield, while a low groan escaped the lips of the terrified wretch before him. With a yell of joy, Denis bounded forward, and the next moment, amidst loud and deafening huzzas, the curly brown peruke was thrown high over the heads of the assembled crowd.

"See, see, the spalpeen, and sure isn't it a shame," shouted Denis, "that ye should be afther disgracing an old man's white locks in such a way? And now what'll we do, Gíneral, with this thraitorous spy? I'm afther thinking it would do him a dale of good to tie him on a donkey's back, and give him a rope's end all through the streets of Limerick; but first, yer honor, we'll have a bit o' sport, and be afther shaving his head, seeing that thin he'll have thrue and rale reason to wear a wig."

"Well said, Denis," replied Sarsfield. "And now, Pat, let me hear what punishment you devise, and then I can choose between the two."

Pat lifted his cap to the General, and then said;

"Thin if the thruth may be tould, Gíneral, I'm afther

thinking frind Denis too gintle by half. Whisht, yer honor," he added, with a finger on his lips, "wouldn't it be a purtier thing to hang him up and let him die the thraitor's death."

"Hurra! hurra!" shouted the mob, the cry taken up by the multitude in the distance; "let him die the thraitor's death. If ye spares him, General, its sure and afther mischief he'll be goin' agin."

"What say you, traitorous spy," shouted Sarsfield, "why shouldn't you die the death ye so rich deserve, as these men so justly decree?"

"Spare me, oh, spare me," cried the miserable wretch, "and I promise you I'll *never, never*, set foot in Ireland again. Here, here," he exclaimed, putting his hands in his pockets, and with frantic eagerness, pulling out sundry rolls of paper, "I had these from King William's favorite page, and give them to you instead of to those for whom they were intended. Pardon me, and I will"

"Give him to *us*, General dear, give him to *us*, and we'll make the spalpeen answer for some of his tricks," exclaimed the voices of men raised to such a pitch of fury that but for the presence of a leader as popular as Sarsfield, it had been certain the career of this dangerous fanatic had been immediately cut short.

As it was, however, Sarsfield again commanded silence, and recommended him to mercy on account of his old age. Then, turning to Denis, he said:

"I think I shall leave this wretched creature to your merciful treatment, Denis, you undertaking, however, to see that he embarks for London as soon as the punishment shall have been inflicted."

"Och, thin, General, sure and I think out of consitheration to his white hairs, barring the rale fact that he doesn't

care one bit about thim himself, we'll be afther letting him off a little more aisy than I thought of doing; so, yer honor," added Denis, in one of his most persuasive tones, "suppose we give him only fifty lashes. Sure and I have the hould of him, and will see that he is fairly banished from the Emerald Isle forever."

The General bowed his assent, and aware that he might safely commit this discomfited villain into the hands of Denis, he delivered him up to his safe custody, the former carrying him off in triumph, amidst the yells and groans of the mob.

Poor Denis! Benson escaped much more mercifully than he deserved, for he chose to give him the lashes himself, and laid them on as lightly as his own merciful nature prompted, to every roar the wretch uttered answering, "Hould yer tongue, ye spalpeen, or I'll give the lash to some one who will be afther laying it on a dale heavier than I do."

Indeed Benson was mercifully spared, seeing that he had no right to expect to get off with his life. The lash hurt him but little. The matter of shaving his head, which Denis scrupulously exacted, and which occasioned him and his fellows no small degree of merriment, was, in fact, the most bitter part of his punishment, as will be seen later.

No sooner had the mob dispersed than Sarsfield, quietly seated with Miss O'Neill, proceeded to examine the papers. They proved to be a packet of letters that had passed between himself and William's favorite page, Harding, from which it appeared that not only was Benson contriving to break off all prospect of a union between Florence and Sir Reginald, but had also offered himself as a spy on the movements of the General in Limerick, and unless fortunately recognized by the brother of Denis, should very probably have caused much mischief to good Father Lawson, now an inmate, for the time being, in the house of Catherine O'Neill.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BARONET'S PRESENTATION.



OUR candid opinion now, my dear uncle, of William of Orange?" said Florence, watching with whimsical curiosity certain minute preparations Sir Charles was making for presenting himself at Kensington the evening after his first introduction to the king.

The baronet appeared embarrassed, and replied, testily :

"What makes you so curious? The king received me courteously enough, child. Is it not a mark of his royal favor that I spend this evening in his banqueting room? I should not be surprised, Florence, if a favor of the same kind is shown you by queen Mary, who, perhaps, is more gracious after all than you take her to be, and even, in time, make a convert of Florence O'Neill."

"Yes, truly," and Florence smiled somewhat contemptuously, "Mary would be very gracious to me if she could see into my heart; why, it positively makes me unhappy to think that my lips must press the woman's hand."

"Suppose I were to whisper a few words in the king's ear concerning your disloyalty, do you think you can trust me?"

"Yes, dearest uncle," and she affectionately kissed the forehead of the venerable old man as he prepared to depart, "I *can* trust you, because you love me far too well to betray me; and, moreover, understand, I have read your secret. You dislike the Dutch King, though you will not own it, perhaps, even to yourself."

"Ah, you are a saucy girl," said Sir Charles, parting back the sunny tresses of his niece, "how can you read my

secret thoughts : Why, I tell you, I think myself highly honored, that I, a simple baronet, have the *entree* to William's presence afforded me."

"Especially, as you feel quite convinced," replied the aggravating Florence, "that Dutch William has a keen eye to gain broad acres, and widely spread influence, *simple* baronet though you be."

Sir Charles made no reply, but, anxious to close the conversation, hurried from the room, while Florence, relapsing for a few minutes into a musing attitude, drew her writing materials before her and wrote as follows :

DEAR MRS. ROBINSON :

I beg you to tell your husband that I shall certainly be with him on the morning after the arrangements now pending shall have been completed, provided you can yourself undertake to accompany me to your house. I, on my part, expect to have communications to make, which, doubtless, will be valuable to absent friends.

Yours, in all friendship,

ELIZABETH FITZGERALD.

This courteously worded epistle, signed and directed under feigned names, Florence then carefully sealed and despatched to Mrs. Ashton's house in Covent Garden, and for the next half-hour this daring young lady, without a thought as to the troubles she might be weaving for herself, by mixing herself up with this conspiracy, amused herself by thinking over the few words that had passed between herself and the baronet, which together with certain little points, clearly showed her that her uncle did not admire what he had observed in the king's character, enough to make him resigned at changing the tactics of his whole life. And though she could not get him to speak out, she was aware he was restive under the mirthful spirit with which she chose to force on him, her conviction, that in spite of the

honor he prated about he had seen nothing in the Dutch King to warrant his espousal of his interests.

Meanwhile, the Queen had anxiously expected the arrival of the churlish old man, whom her father had never been able to lure from the seclusion and sports of his country home, and was also curious to receive the beautiful niece whom she knew had long been the favored *protégée* of Mary of Modena, for she was aware of her betrothal to St. John, and trusted by artfully bringing the two in close contact with each other, to be enabled to break through the barrier which had been opening up between them, prevent the return of Florence to the court of the exiled Queen, and attach her to her own person, for Mary really designed appointing Florence to the post of one of her maids of honor, with the idea that eventually all the secrets of the little court at St. Germain, and the hopes and fears of her father and his consort would be laid open to herself.

However, let us return from our digression, and accompany the baronet to the presence of William the Third. The king was always sparing of speech and singularly taciturn to those about him. When at his meals his manners were disgusting to others; and the irritable spirit of the old baronet chafed within him as he observed Lord Clarendon, who had accompanied him thither, take his stand behind the king's chair, beckoning Sir Charles to follow his example by occupying the same situation.

No word did William ever speak on occasions like the present, nor was it his custom to invite the proudest nobles in the land to sit down and eat: their master and their conqueror he deemed himself to be, and their place was behind his chair, the neglected witnesses of his meal.

With feelings of intense disgust, Sir Charles regarded the King, inwardly cursing the folly which had brought

him thither, for in vain had he awaited the honor of a word; but no—not one had escaped the lips of William of Orange.

The old gentleman stood long a disgusted witness of the scene before him, and during the time occupied in the dignified employment assigned to himself, he mentally exclaimed:

“Marry, but it just serves me right, I am but justly met with, what business had I to be here at all, instead of making merry with friends and tenants at Merville Grange? Or if at nearly four score years of age, I must needs be fool enough to meddle with politics, then why not devote my fortune and the remainder of my life in the service of the rightful King. Well, well, a few weeks more and I will see if I cannot make my escape—aye, even if I feign an attack of my old enemy the gout, and shut myself up a voluntary prisoner in my own house. Anything sooner than thus crouch before this Dutchman’s rule. And——”

But the thread of his meditations was here cut short by William rising from his seat, and graciously vouchsafing a few words to himself and Lord Clarendon, with some three or four noblemen who stood around. On this day, Queen Mary had dined alone in her own apartment, on account of some trifling indisposition.

As William was about to retire, as if struck by a sudden thought, he turned to the baronet, saying:

“You have a niece living with you at present Sir Charles, she is betrothed, we understand, to Sir Reginald St. John in whose welfare both the queen and myself are warmly interested. Her Majesty, you have already been informed will grant her an audience on the morrow. See that you do not neglect to bring her to the queen.”

Then awaiting no reply, William passed on, followed by

two or three of the most intimate of his Dutch friends amongst whom was his favorite gentleman, Walter Harding.

Comfortably ensconced in his own private closet, the king now reclined at his ease in a luxurious, richly carved chair, covered with crimson velvet.

English magnates were no longer present, and with his Dutch friends and the favored Englishman, Harding, William could at last relax and deem it allowable to discard the restraints of royalty, and quaffing off his favorite liquor, Holland gin, which the English nobles lately in his presence would scorn to touch, passed what were, no doubt, the pleasantest hours of the day.

But on this occasion it was with one particular person that William had to do ; and beckoning the favorite to his side, his grave countenance wearing a most gracious smile, William exclaimed, eagerly rubbing his hands together :

“ Now, then, Harding, what have you to tell me about the vagaries of that fool Benson ? Speak out at once, man. I should not be surprised to hear that the wretch has come to evil by putting himself in the lion’s den, if your information was correct, that Sarsfield really had him in his power, but out upon the fool, why did he take on himself to play the spy, if he was so dull witted that he could not act his part better ? ”

“ Ah, your Majesty, I beg you to spare him,” replied Harding, “ his wits would have saved him well enough, but a cruel mishap prevented him from serving his royal master as he could have wished. I will bring him to your presence a little later ; he has been waiting in one of my apartments for several hours, in order to beg your Majesty’s pardon for the awkward way in which he executed his mission ; but, indeed, he has undergone the roughest treatment, and narrowly escaped with his life.”

"A good thing had he lost it," was the ill-tempered reply, "if he could not do his work better. Make no excuses, but tell me the contents of the papers which I hear have fallen into Sarsfield hands.

For a moment Harding hesitated as though afraid to excite the wrath of William, but the keen eyes of the king were fixed steadily upon him as he quaffed off another glass of Holland. Somewhat intimidated, Harding answered truthfully from fear lest Benson, when questioned by the king, should betray him.

"I pray your Majesty's forgiveness if I have done amiss, but out of pure affection for my friend St. John, Benson has been zealously endeavoring to break off the proposed union between him and the Lady Florence O'Neill. She cares not to become Lady St. John, your majesty, for he tells me she has quarrelled with him for his loyalty to your gracious self. And might I aspire so high," added Harding, "I doubt not but that I could have the wit and the power, too, to win the lady's love, and make her, disloyal as she is, one of the most loyal in your majesty's dominions."

"You are an impudent knave and full of conceit," said William, "and fancy great things of your handsome person to think you may look so high, but remember the lady is of high birth, and proud of her descent, if all that is said of her be true. Moreover, I have heard you say you are under obligations to Sir Reginald, and yet, under the rose, you are trying to rob him of the lady. But enough," he continued, languidly, "she is not to be won by you. Finish quickly; what more of Benson?"

"Ah, your Majesty, I have the worst to tell yet. He had papers on his person when the brutal mob got hold of him, one of whom formerly knew him in London as a persecutor of the Papists, and, unfortunately, recognized him in

Limerick, and these papers, from various hands, your majesty," added he, for the king's eyes rested on his countenance, as if he doubted the truth of his words, "these papers alluded, it is true, to the offer he had made of becoming a spy on the movements of the St. Germain's party in Limerick, and—and they are all in the hands of Sarsfield, together with a paper accepting his offers of services by one of your majesty's officers."

"Bring me in the wretched fool," said William, his accents almost guttural with rage. "Let me see him instantly," he added, and Harding, leaving the room, in a few moments reappeared, ushering in the *soi-disant* Layton.

"You fool," said the king, "it would have served you right if you had lost your head for your folly in meddling with concerns beyond your power of management. I hope, old as you are, that they punished you in some fashion, if only as a penalty for the folly which prevented you from serving our interests better."

"Ah, spare me, your Majesty," said Benson, sinking on his knees; "surely I could not help being recognized by one whom ill-fortune threw in my way some years since."

The frown which had set on William's countenance had gradually relaxed, notwithstanding the furious mood he was in when Benson entered his presence. He had seen this man before with straight white locks falling over his forehead, but now that venerable head was graced with a wig, powdered indeed, but a veritable wig nevertheless, and it made him look quite a different personage. Again, there was something inexpressibly ludicrous in the whole bearing of the man, his rueful look, his pale countenance, and the trembling servility with which he crouched at William's feet, that the latter was moved to such a degree of merriment, that he was fairly convulsed with laughter, to the no small mortification of the kneeling Benson.

“Why, you foolish knave,” he said, when his laughter had subsided, “what has made you disguise yourself, you are too old at fourscore years to indulge in vanity.”

“No, your Majesty,” said Harding, really pitying the discomfiture of the wretched being, “I am sure your Majesty will pity Benson when I tell you the wretched mob who assaulted him in the house at which he had taken refuge, though they left him in possession of his head, shaved off his white locks and most mercilessly applied the lash to his shoulders, exulting in the torment they inflicted and making merry over his annoyance, whilst they shaved his head out of pure rage, because to disguise himself he had put on an unpowdered brown wig.”

Gazing contemptuously on Benson, the king, whose mirth had again given way to anger, exclaimed :

“Fool, it would almost have served you right had Sarsfield ordered them to take off your head for your folly in carrying papers of such importance in your pockets. To your feet man, and get out of my sight; I pity you, indeed, why, they gave you a much lighter punishment than you deserved; they ought to have punished you for me.”

As William spoke thus, the miserable Benson arose and hastened, by no means unwillingly, though perfectly astounded, out of the presence of the king. Indeed, his reception was not of the kind he had expected, though at the same time, he had feared a sharp rebuke for his imprudence in keeping about his person papers of such importance as those we have alluded to.

Ingratitude, however, to those who served him, was one of the chief ingredients in the character of the king, his brutal remark concerning the Calvinist Walker, is a proof of this vice. The Protestant party were justly disgusted at the speech of the ungrateful king, for on one of them tell-

ing him that Parson Walker was amongst the slain in the *mélee* at the Boyne, the coarse and unfeeling reply, was, “*Why did the fool go there?*” This then, was the tribute which he paid to the memory of the man to whom he owed so much, and who had gallantly defended Londonderry. Nor may the siege of Waterford be passed by, for when he was asked in what way the sick and wounded prisoners should be disposed of, the savage answer was, “*Burn them.*” One thousand of these unfortunates were thus destroyed by the place in which they were cooped up shortly afterwards bursting into flames.*

CHAPTER VIII.



ES, it is quite true that the king's troops are in so miserable a condition, that one-third of them could not be relied upon, if Tyrconnell upon his arrival were to give them a pistole each,” said a fine looking young man in military uniform, in answer to the remarks of a brother officer, who had but recently joined William's forces in Ireland.

“I am surprised to hear there is such an amount of disaffection,” replied our old acquaintance, Sir Reginald, “or that party feeling ran so high in favor of James, even in Ireland, but really I am getting disgusted at the paltry means that are being resorted to, to strengthen the hands of the king's government; from all quarters the same tales are rife; the most nefarious subterfuges are used to bring over wavering adherents of the Stuart race.”

“Why, St. John,” exclaimed his companion, in a tone of unfeigned surprise, “I should have thought you the last

*MacPherson, State Papers.

man on earth to be very particular as to *how* the party whose interests you espouse, should prosper, when we remember recent doings at Limerick."

The hot blood rushed to the temples of St. John, and with his hand on the hilt of his sword, he replied :

" 'Sdeath, sir ! what do you mean by such a remark. What do I either know or care about what is going on in Limerick ? I, who this night for the first time in my life, have seen this place, and have but within this short two hours arrived from Kinsale.

" My dear St. John," replied the young officer, placing his hand in a familiar and irritating manner on his friend's shoulder, " can you for one moment attempt to lead me to suppose that you are ignorant of all the fine things that have lately been done in your name to the unspeakable annoyance of Miss O'Neill's relations in Limerick ! Own the truth," continued Seymour, the once sworn friend of Sir Reginald, " and say that you have forsworn the beautiful Papist, Florence O'Neill, whose heart is even now with the Jacobite crew at St. Germain's, for the godly William of Orange, who has come to save our lives and Protestant faith and liberties, and from pure disinterestedness has taken his father-in-law's crown for himself."

" Have done with your taunting gibes, Seymour, and come to the point at once ; explain in what way my name has been used, and tell me who has dared say anything against my betrothal with the lady Florence."

The spirit of mischief had evidently taken possession of the naturally mirthful Seymour, for after having, to the unspeakable disgust of St. John, given vent to the risible faculties in a hearty burst of laughter, he replied : " You have an intimate friend, named Benson, St. John, a canting old knave, forgive the expression, and——"

“ Ah, Benson, what about him, he left me some two months since, to make a journey into Wales, to visit some relations; he has not been to Ireland for many years.”

“ Indeed,” said Seymour, vainly attempting to repress another burst of laughter, “ really now this is too ridiculous, do you mean to deny St. John, that you do not know that he offered himself to the military authorities of this town as a spy on General Sarsfield’s movements; that you even deputed him to be the means of conveying the intelligence to the family of Miss O’Neill, that your opinions and feelings were so wedded to the cause of William of Orange that you had eventually broken the chains which had hitherto subsisted between you, and which for some time past, have become weaker and weaker? To sum all up in a few words; you are said by him to have led Harding to write to Benson in your name, requesting him to further the good cause by every means in his power, to gain admission to the maternal aunt of Florence O’Neill, resident at Limerick, and through her to become a spy on the actions of the General and his party, avowing also your regret that you had suffered the charms of her beautiful face to draw you aside from the allegiance you owe to William and Mary. Moreover, you express an eager desire to redeem past errors by offering your services as speedily as possible to our commanding officers in this place. Such, my dear fellow,” added Seymour, “ to corroborate all, here you are in your own person; but forgive my ill-timed merriment, for I see that an ill use has been made of your name. But really, when I remember the finale, and Benson’s exit from the house of Miss O’Neill, which set all Limerick in an uproar, it is exceedingly hard to repress another burst of laughter.”

“ For heaven’s sake, Seymour, be quiet,” said St. John, “ and tell me the whole truth: for some enemy has been at

work, over and above the vile mischief-making Benson, whom I am determined shall not have the opportunity of meddling with my affairs in future."

Seymour then narrated in his own way those circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted, relative to the capture of Benson, or Layton, as for the sake of disguise, he had chosen to call himself, together with an account of the summary punishment inflicted on him at the hands of the mob.

It were, of course, vain to attempt to describe the wounded pride, mortification and anger with which St. John listened to all he had to say, or his pleasure on hearing of the punishment of his villainous ex-preceptor Benson. For a few moments he was silent, then he said:

"Farewell, Seymour, for awhile, before an hour is over I shall be on my way to Limerick."

"To Limerick!" ejaculated his friend, "why it is the head-quarters of General Sarsfield."

"Exactly so, and also the dwelling-place of the General's cousin, Miss O'Neill."

"And in your present mood, I shall not be surprised to hear of a defection, for it is not unlikely you may find your way to Sarsfield himself," said Seymour, with a significant glance at St. John's dejected countenance.

"Keep your surmises to yourself Seymour, I have been foully wronged as you well know, and——"

"True enough," was the reply, "and as I am your sworn friend, I say nothing and keep my thoughts locked within my own breast, but I tell you, Reginald, I am morally certain that a very short time hence King William will hear that the cousin of the aged St. John, the supporter of the commonwealth, hitherto so devoted to his interests, has passed over with many others to the ranks of the exiled James."

CHAPTER IX.

WITH an unusual degree of outward calmness and composure, which she was, however, far from feeling, Florence prepared to accompany her uncle to the palace: on arriving at which she was at once shown into a small ante-room, communicating with the boudoir of the queen.

This, the favorite sitting-room into which Mary had been ushered, was hung with pale blue silk, the draperies and curtains festooned and looped with silver, the ottomans and couches being also of the same color and material. Tables of curiously inlaid wood supported vases of precious metals; some were filled with the choicest exotics, others exhaled an almost oppressive odor from the perfumes burning within them, so that as Florence entered the apartment a sense of faintness stole over her, but she remembered the necessity there was for calmness and composure in the presence of the queen; and, leaning on the arm of Lord Clarendon, with a cheek only a shade paler, perhaps, than usual, the heiress of the O'Neills approached Mary with a firm step, and gracefully kneeling, pressed to her lips the small white hand so graciously extended, though her heart was all with Mary of Modena.

Still there was a something in the presence of Mary of England which fascinated Florence in spite of herself. "She is a Stuart certainly, notwithstanding her grievous sins; she is so like our beloved king, her father," mused the girl for one short moment, during which the queen, with sweet soft words, requested her to be seated.

Yes, there were the features of the unfortunate line of the Stuarts strongly delineated on Mary's oval countenance, and

as the eyes of Florence fell on her tall and still graceful form, her pleasing and regular features, and air of quiet dignity, they fell beneath the scrutiny of those dark, sparkling eyes, bent so curiously and with so strict a scrutiny upon herself.

“ I wish I might dare to love you,” thought Florence, as her eyes met those of the queen.

“ I must be wary, and use you for my own ends, for you are my step-mother’s favorite,” was the thought of Mary of England.

Graciously, too, did the queen welcome the baronet. Then, after a few common-place observations, she hazarded the remark: “ You have been some time at St. Germain’s; how fared it with my father when you left France?” Then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, conscious that her words might seem to bear a different meaning than that which she wished to express, she added, whilst the slightest perceptible color mantled her cheek, “ I mean is his health good, as also that of his consort?”

“ His majesty was well, and also my gracious mistress,” said Florence; “ and pleased, indeed, will they be to hear that I, already so favored by their notice, should also have been honored by your majesty’s gracious reception of my poor self.”

“ And you do not meditate a return to St. Germain’s?” said Mary, fixing her eyes with a penetrating glance on the features of Florence, as though she would read her very thoughts. “ But no, that cannot be, if rumor speaks correctly, for it is said that you are betrothed to Sir Reginald St. John, one of the most favored of our beloved lord and consort; nay, our royal favor has been sought in this matter; but of that later. We know that Sir Reginald is of himself deserving, and we see that the lady he has chosen

has even more than her fair share of woman's charms ; but, as we have already said, we will speak of this later, at a more fitting time, and then devise measures for your nuptials, and make arrangements, it may be, for your future well-being near our own person."

Then turning to her uncle, Lord Clarendon, Mary entered into a long and animated discussion respecting the contemplated departure of the king, leaving Florence a prey to any but pleasurable emotions. Had she dared to express the feelings of her heart she could not have done so, for Mary had purposely contrived her speech cunningly enough, leaving her no room to expostulate, assuming for granted that she was graciously furthering the most ardent desires of the girl's heart, and so closing her speech as to afford Florence no chance of escape, without being guilty of the most flagrant breach of etiquette by interrupting the queen whilst speaking, or rudely breaking in when she was addressing the Earl. In fact, Florence was marvelously like some wretched fly, when securely trammelled in the spider's web, and every effort was now exerted to throw a veil of dissimulation for the present over her own conduct, and to govern well her outward bearing, in order that no trace of the inward anxiety she endured should escape her, and be evidenced in the expression of her features.

But Mary was far too penetrating in her judgment, and too clear-headed to be at all deceived. Her speech had been artfully contrived. She knew well one of the most ardent admirers of the unfortunate Mary of Modena had knelt unwillingly at her feet, that she had broken off her proposed union with Sir Reginald solely because the latter was attached to her court, that the girl's whole heart was centred in the weal of the exiled James, and that she was anxiously looking forward to the time of her return to St. Germain's.

But the queen had resolved she should not see St. Germain again if she could help it, that she *should* marry Sir Reginald, and, moreover, little by little, she would manage to extort, having first gained access to her heart by the exercise of all those blandishments of which she was mistress, a full account of all that was passing in France.

It remained, however, for time to show whether the queen could so easily manage her new prey as she supposed; but be that as it may, the latter felt, when too late, that she had played a rather dangerous game in coming to London, or, being there, by failing to preserve the strictest *incognito*; and still more embarrassed was she when, at the moment of parting, Mary, with the same gracious tone and manner, addressing herself to the baronet, said:

“You will not forget, Sir Charles, that we shall use all our influence to promote this affair of the nuptials of your niece. We have felt much interested in the Lady Florence, in consequence of the reports which have reached our ears of her beauty and worth; and ascertaining from the king that Sir Reginald has but recently left the metropolis for Ireland, have obtained his promise that he shall be at once summoned back to England.”

Much as Florence wished to speak she dared not, but merely bowed her acknowledgments, whilst the baronet was profuse in his thanks for the interest the queen evinced in her welfare; and with a heart full of gloomy apprehensions for the future, Florence accompanied her uncle back to his residence.

Alone in her boudoir, the queen moodily watched their departure, accompanied by her uncle, the Earl of Clarendon, and with compressed lips and fingers, nervously clutched together, she exclaimed, aloud:

“Well met, a pretty trio i’faith. In the girl I take some

little interest, and will mould her to my will; but if she prove rebellious—well, aye, what then? Suppose she is of a stubborn nature. Yet, no; with this St. John daily, hourly beside her, she will become all I wish to see her, a willing tool in my hands. She does not like my proposal, however, for I saw the color in her cheeks come and go when I spoke of her staying here, and of my hastening her nuptials. And as to you, my beautiful uncle,” continued the queen, with increased irritation, as she beheld Lord Clarendon passing through the court-yard beneath her window, “I have you fast, and will take care you are safely caged in the Tower, if in the slightest way you are found to have any share in this new conspiracy, a rumor of which has reached us, and in which your name is coupled with that of fair mistress Florence and others we had thought affected to our persons, and if” . . .

“Aye, indeed, if they are guilty let them have such mercy as they deserve,” said the voice of William of Orange, who, unobserved, had entered the boudoir and overheard the soliloquy of the queen. “I tell you, Mary,” said William, “to watch Clarendon well, and do not suffer his relationship to yourself to mar the ends of justice. Trust me, he is not faithful to our interests.”

“I know it,” said Mary, fixing her eyes reproachfully on her husband, “but do not speak to a wife devoted and tender as myself of any thought of family connections being suffered to clash with the duty which I owe to you. Ah, my beloved one,” she continued, clasping her husband’s hand tenderly within her own, “cared I *ever* for my own kindred when *you* were concerned; cared I *even* for the father of whom I was the most indulged and favored child; have I not ever been the most dutiful and submissive wife, and when I had left home and kindred for you, did I not

soon tear from my heart, whether at your bidding or not, every emotion of old home affection, not given to you, so that I might be more truly and entirely yours?"

"Well, yes, I must give to you the praise you have deserved, and own you have done your duty in my regard," said William. "I have found you generally faithful in these points, and when remiss a few words of admonition have set you in the right path again, though remember, for your caution, if ever tempted to err again in this regard, that I encountered difficulty with you in days gone by."

The fine eyes of Mary filled with tears as again she gazed reproachfully on her husband.

"Ah, my best beloved," she said, "remind me not of my former shortcomings, which, God knoweth, I have long since bitterly atoned for by many a tear in the long hours of your absence from my side. I tell you once more that Clarendon shall suffer severely should we find him in the slightest way implicated in this rising. Small mercy shall he meet with, any more than if he were an alien to my blood; or, indeed, the fair Florence O'Neill either, should she be involved or mixed up with mischief, as the *protégée* of my gracious step-mother is most likely to be."

"Ah, indeed, and pending that matter of the girl," said the king, "I have sent to Ireland to require the immediate return of St. John, and if it be true that she has dared refuse him for his known fidelity to myself, it will be matter for conjecture as to what course she will now pursue."

"Poor fool," said Mary, laughing, "did I not dislike her for the unwarrantable prejudice she presumes to entertain against us, I could almost have pitied the agitation she suffered when I spoke of our interesting ourselves to hasten her wedding, and that you had summoned St. John hither. She played her part well, but is too unsophisticated

to have gained the mastery over her features. Indeed, the mistress whom she almost adores, for she regards Mary of Modena, I have been told, with feelings little short of veneration, has taught her no lesson on that point, for she herself is the creature of impulse, as your majesty well knows, and by look, or word, or hasty exclamation, is sure to discover to the world all she feels; and no small wonder that this minion, who holds her in such veneration, imitates the idol at whose shrine she bows. But I will watch her well and closely, and if I find foul play to your interests, my liege, depend on it, your loving wife will not spare her power to avenge and punish, whether the transgressor be Clarendon, in whose veins my own blood flows, or the fair descendant of the O'Neills, on whose face I never looked till now."

Thus spoke the wife of William of Orange, now bidding adieu for a few hours to the man at whose word she had forsworn every other tie, and trampled under foot the holiest affections of our nature. It is a historical fact that it was the constant aim of William to root out of her heart every natural emotion; and well did he succeed, for she soon imbibed the naturally cold, apathetic disposition of her husband, and centred all her ambition in deserving the epithet of a humble and obedient wife.*

It is hard to look back into the records of the time at which we write and not feel indignation at the subservient devotedness of this misguided princess, who whilst she deliberately crushed every emotion of filial affection beneath her feet, carried her attachment to her husband on a maudlin sentimentality, servile in her submissiveness, and idolatrous in her love of one who, cold as was his nature, had a warmer spot in his heart for another than his wife, and who, to say the least, was but a cold and indifferent husband.

* Vide Smollet's History.

CHAPTER X.



BITTERLY cold night was that of the 29th of December, in the year 1691. A cutting northeast wind, united to a fall of snow, which had become heavier as the short winter day waned on, and to which, in the earlier part, was added a somewhat thick fog, had conspired to render the previous day as bitterly inclement and unpleasant to the good citizens of London as could well be imagined.

The wind sighed in long and fitful gusts, and cut across the face of the wayfarer as he turned the corner of the streets; it howled amongst the chimney-pots in the old city, and made the windows rattle in their frames, and the sign-board suspended over the door of the Dog Tavern, on Ludgate street, creaked and flapped heavily as it swayed to and fro in the bitter night blast.

But within the hotel all was warmth and comfort; the huge fire in the kitchen burned brightly in the ample fireplace, before which hung a large sirloin, and the red flame flickered cheerily on the bright culinary utensils which garnished the kitchen wall. A goodly array of choice smoked hams hung suspended from huge hooks in the rafters that supported the ceiling, and the apparently freshly-sanded floor as yet showed not the print of a step from the dreary scene without.

But just as the heavy clock of St. Paul's tolled the hour of nine, two persons entered, clad in large cloaks whitened with the heavy snow-storm, and followed by a woman, whose dress betokened her to move in the humble walks of life, and advancing to the fireside, they stood for a few moments enjoying its genial warmth, the men conversing in

an undertone with the worthy and somewhat buxom hostess, Mistress Warner, who had just entered the kitchen to deliver various orders concerning her expected guests.

"You have a private apartment for me, Mistress Warner," said our old acquaintance, John Ashton, whom it were easy to recognize, despite the slouched hat drawn over his eyes, and the cloak closely buttoned up to the throat, with its huge collar pulled up to the chin.

"Yes, the green-room is ready," replied the woman, "and supper shall be on the table at the appointed time. Would it not be well, good Mr. Ashton," she added, "to repair thither immediately." And sinking the already low tones of her voice to a whisper, she continued:

"See you not yon party who have just arrived; I do not like the air of curiosity with which they regard yourself and friends."

In fact, two persons had closely followed on the heels of Ashton; in the one, a well-formed, handsome young man, we recognize the page, Harding; in the other, the villanous ex-preceptor Benson, not yet by his late recontre in Ireland sufficiently afraid of meddling with the affairs of others to abstain from playing the part of the informer. Acting on the suggestion of the worthy hostess, Ashton made a sign to his friend, and bade the woman who had accompanied him hither follow him to the apartment which Mistress Warner had spoken of. Having closed the door, stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze, and handed some wine to his companions, Ashton introduced the female to his friend, Burdett, by the name of Mrs. Pratt, saying: "You are aware that mercantile matters require me, with two of my friends, to go immediately to France to purchase some bales of French silk for one of our city merchants. In order to expedite this business, then, Mrs. Pratt, who is a friend of

the master of a vessel I wish to engage, has met us here to-night, and the owner, Mr. Paseley, will not be long ere he arrives, and you, Burdett, will, therefore, be a witness of the bargain we shall make." Ashton had scarce finished these few words when a low tap at the door announced the arrival of the person for whom he was waiting.

The man Paseley was of unprepossessing appearance, short and thick set, and an unaccountable impression of impending evil shot across Ashton's heart, as his eyes met those of this person fixed on his countenance with a scrutinizing, sinister expression, and which, when they encountered those of Ashton, immediately fell beneath his glance. Paseley was, in short, one of those persons who cannot look you in the face from an innate consciousness of their own villainy.

At length he said :

"You want to engage my smack, Sir, at least, so I understand from my friend, Mrs. Pratt : may I ask to what port you wish to conduct her.

"To some one of the seaports of France," replied Ashton. "I suppose you already know, from your friend, that myself and some two or three other persons are about to go thither, to purchase silk and other articles of French merchandize."

Again Ashton noticed the man's eyes fixed curiously on his face, as though he questioned the truth of what he said, and he replied :

"Well, sir, you shall have the use of my vessel, but really I shall expect a large sum for the hire, under existing circumstances."

"*Under existing circumstances?*" repeated Ashton, laying a stress on the words the man had used ; "What do you mean ? I want to hire your vessel, and *you* will be glad

to have a large sum for its use; name the amount you require."

"One hundred and fifty pounds," was the unhesitating reply.

Anxious as Ashton was to secure the vessel, even *he* started at the mention of the enormous sum, and after much haggling, the stipulated sum was brought down to the still enormous amount, if we consider the value of money at the time of which we write, of one hundred guineas. It was then arranged that Mrs. Pratt, with Burdett and Paseley, were to meet on the following morning at the Seven Stars, in Covent Garden, an hotel near to Ashton's place of residence, and there conclude the bargain, by depositing the money in Paseley's or Mrs. Pratt's hands, should the former not be able to be there: and the two friends were then left to refresh themselves, after a long walk in the inclemency of the weather, by the goodly sirloin which Mistress Warner served up, flanked by a substantial pastry and a flagon of strong home-brewed ale, succeeded by hot spiced wine.

But let us leave the brave and unfortunate Ashton, whose life was sacrificed, as our readers will know, in the cause of the exiled Stuart race, and in the present ill-omened enterprise, and follow the ill-conditioned Paseley and the woman Pratt into the room beneath, in fact, to the kitchen of the hotel, in which still remained Benson and the page Walter Harding.

No sooner were the advancing footsteps of Paseley and his companion heard, than the two former personages hurried to meet them, and the sinister countenance of Paseley lighted up with a smile full of meaning as he approached, and touching Harding on the shoulder, he whispered:

"I have news for her Majesty, follow me."

Out into the cold dark night, with the keen north-east

wind blowing full in their faces, together with the driving sleet, the crisp snow crackling beneath their feet, and the sky as dark as their own hearts, walked the page and the preceptor, the master of the smack and his friend, Mrs. Pratt, and scarcely had the doors of the hotel closed behind them, than the man Paseley advancing to Harding, whispered :

“He is prepared to give even as much as a hundred pounds for the hire of the vessel ; I asked one hundred and fifty, thinking it would go far to show whether it were wanted for purposes of merchandise or not ; as if so, he would entertain no idea of hiring it, instead of which he demurs a little, and then coolly offers a hundred guineas, as if the guineas were but as many shillings, and now I will leave Mrs. Pratt to tell *her* tale, which I am sure will strengthen the idea we entertain. Then rejoining the woman, Paseley whispered a few words in her ear, she nodded assent, and advanced to Harding, while Paseley and Benson conferred together in a low tone of voice.

“Look you, Mr. Harding,” said she, “Mr. Ashton offered me one thousand pounds, to be paid down before Lady-day, if I helped him to the hiring of this vessel. One thousand pounds!” she repeated. “This is a large sum, and would make a rich woman of Martha Pratt ; yet out of love to her gracious Majesty, I give it all up. What do you think, Mr. Harding, will Queen Mary do for me ? for ’tis I and Paseley chiefly, more than yourself and Benson, who have helped to the unfolding of this plot.”

“Now do not alarm yourself, Mistress Pratt,” said Harding ; “I will take care to represent to her Majesty what you have lost in her service, and depend on it, she will not forget you. Count on me for standing your friend, and rest assured we shall, all of us, receive a rich reward. I

have dogged Ashton repeatedly, I know that he was on terms of friendship with Nevill Payne, who suffered torture, and has since died from its effects.* Indeed, I remember Ashton was with him last April at a Jacobite meeting, held at the Globe Tavern, near Northumberland House, and I feel convinced that the plot now hatching has some connexion with the last, and——”

“And Ashton is a poor man, remember,” interrupted Benson; “Verily friend Harding, the Lord is making use of us, His elect ones, as instruments in His hands for the

*Queen Mary and her ministers strove very hard to make the honorable and high-minded Payne, Jacobite tutor to the young Earl of Mar, legal informer regarding this conspiracy, in which many of the nobility in Scotland, as well as England, were involved some months before it had reached its present height. And later, Mary wrote several letters to the privy Council in Scotland, making ominous enquiries as to what had become of him. The following, in answer to some of these inquiries, was written to the principal minister of her Majesty for Scotland, who was then at Court.

“To LORD MELVILLE :

“Yesterday, in the afternoon, Nevill Payne was questioned as to those things that were not of the greatest concern, and had but gentle torture given him, being resolved to repeat it this day, which accordingly, about six this evening, we inflicted on both his thumbs and one of his legs, with all the severity that was consistent with humanity (?) even to that pitch that *we could not have preserved life and have gone further*; but without the least success, for his answers to all our interrogatories were negative. Yea, he was so manly and resolute under his sufferings, that such of the Council as were not acquainted with all the evidence, were bungled (hesitated), and began to give him charity that he might be innocent. It is surprising to me and others, that flesh and blood could, without fainting, endure the heavy penance he was in for two hours. My stomach is truly out of time by being witness to an act so far cross to my natural temper, that I am fitter for rest than for anything else, but the dangers from such *conspirators to the person of our incomparable king*, have prevailed over me in the Council's name, to have been the promptor of the executioner to increase the torture to so high a pitch.”

The unfortunate Nevill Payne soon afterwards died from the effect of these barbarities.—*Strickland's Life of Mary.*

punishment of Jacobite traitors and false sons of the English Church, like this Ashton, who are straining every nerve to bring back the Popish King, in lieu of the godly William and his consort."

"And the thousand golden guineas which he has promised me," chimed in Mrs. Pratt, "can surely not come from himself; no, doubtless, they are given by friends of the late king, as also the money for hiring the vessel. But I tell you what, Mr. Harding, unless you bring me to quick speech with Queen Mary, I will seek an audience of her Majesty myself, for I am quite determined she shall know how much I am running the risk of losing, in order to serve her cause."

"Pray do not alarm yourself unnecessarily, Mrs. Pratt," replied Harding, sharply; "depend on it, their gracious Majesties will not suffer your services to go unrewarded; so be at the palace at the hour of noon on the morrow, and I will crave an audience for you."

By this time they had reached the Strand, and separated, Harding to return to his apartments at the palace, the entrance to which he obtained, as the hour was somewhat late, by means of a pass-key, intending to usher Benson in with him, and Paseley and the woman Pratt to their respective lodgings in the neighborhood of Covent Garden.



CHAPTER XI.

A SECESSION.



GAIN domiciled with his cousin, Isabel O'Neill, the brave and worthy Sarsfield was compelled, for a time, sorely against his will, to yield to the effects of a violent cold, and became almost rampant under the restraint to which he had been subjected; for he had been confined to his bed during three entire days, at the expiration of which, finding himself somewhat recovered, no solicitation could prevail on him to remain quiet and inactive; so rising some time before the hour of noon, clad in a loose dressing gown, and his pleasant face a shade paler than usual, the General was ready to see and be seen by any who might wish to confer with him on matters of business.

A visitor, however, awaited him of whose arrival he little dreamed, and his astonishment may be better imagined than described when Sir Reginald St. John presented himself before him.

Sir Reginald was, indeed, personally a stranger to the General, though known to him by repute, and the same repute had informed him that he was a brave and skillful officer, a devoted adherent of William of Orange, inheriting, in every respect, the principles of his now aged father, the former inflexible and stern upholder of the Commonwealth.

Sarsfield drew himself up to his full height, and looked inquiringly at his visitor, almost doubting the reality of his presence, certainly never dreaming for a moment that the right arm and sword of St. John were now at the command of James the Second.

Yet so it was, for, advancing forward, St. John exclaimed:

“General Sarsfield, I am willing to serve under your command, and I offer to fight in defence of the rights of his majesty, King James, now in exile at St. Germaines.”

“Is it possible,” exclaimed Sarsfield; “do I hear aright? Report has spoken of you, Sir Reginald, as one of those who were singularly disaffected to the government of King James, as of one, in fact, who trod faithfully in the steps of his ancestors; but, believe me, I seek not to analyze the motives which have brought to our aid the sword of so gallant an officer, I ask you only have you counted on the certain loss you must inevitably sustain when your defection becomes known?”

“I have done so, General, and am well content to abide the issue,” replied Sir Reginald. “I shall lose my estate, which will, of course, become forfeit to the government of William should he still continue to wear the crown, which I now believe he unlawfully usurps. Beyond this, I am not aware that any grievous calamity awaits me. To be plain, my heart sickens at the sight of the many frauds and artifices which are being resorted to for the purpose of upholding William’s interests; nay, more, I have myself suffered in this way but recently, my name having been unlawfully used, and I represented as having broken the tie of betrothal long subsisting between myself and the Lady Florence O’Neill.”

“But are you not aware that you have been summoned to England, and that Florence has been most unwisely introduced to the Court of Mary?” exclaimed the General. “Her situation is now one of extreme difficulty, for, if I do not mistake, she already finds herself in what we may term a species of detention; for, Sir Reginald, you are summoned

to the court as a faithful adherent of William, under the idea that Florence will not dare to refuse to wed you, whilst herself, closely watched by the queen, her only refusal to consent founded on the supposition that you are true to their interests. I had given her credit for more sense," he added, "than to imagine she would so heedlessly throw herself into the power of our foes, for, truly, whichever way I turn I see only difficulty, for had the summons reached you before you came hither, and you had returned as the adherent of William, a sorry plight would Florence have been in, for Queen Mary intended to appoint an early day for your nuptials, and as the case at present stands, though my heart rejoices to receive you as a brother in arms, I see no escape for her, as yet, from the mishap and captivity her foolish heedlessness has caused; for much as she will rejoice to hear that the cause for estrangement existing between you and herself has been so unexpectedly removed, still I do not imagine," he continued, with a smile, "that William and Mary would now receive you save as a traitor whose disloyalty far exceeds that of Florence herself."

"And is it possible Florence has placed herself in the power of Mary," exclaimed Sir Reginald, with a feeling of remorse at his heart, for well he remembered that it was at *his* suggestion Sir Charles de Grey had sought the Court of William, at a time when his own blind attachment to the service of the latter had made him assiduous to gain over as many as possible to his cause.

"I will leave Limerick at once," he said, "and hasten back to England, and see her safe beyond the precincts of the court. They are full of danger to any persons suspected of disaffection to the present government."

"How?" exclaimed the more cool and cautious Sarsfield. "Allow me to point out to you the mad folly of such

an attempt. If Florence is in danger, *your* presence will not save her, and can only result in your own imprisonment. Submit quietly, and trust to the safety of our foolish young relative through the influence of her uncle, Sir Charles, or some other fortuitous chance turning up in her favor."

This, then, was the end of Sir Reginald's journey to Ireland, *this*, the end of his loyalty and love for William, the cause of his estrangement from Florence. In the course of a few days, stung by the base use that had been made of his name, of the discreditable actions daily resorted to, St. John had resolved on yielding his allegiance elsewhere, and secure again the affections of his betrothed; and now, in the home of his maternal aunt, he had become the friend and companion of Sarsfield, the valiant opponent of William, his very name infusing fresh hope into the hearts of their followers and a terror to his enemies.

CHAPTER XII.

A GILDED PRISON.



LITTLE did the fair *fiancée* of Sir Reginald imagine why it was that his return, which she so much dreaded, was delayed far beyond the time the king and queen had expected him.

The events of the last few weeks had told immensely on her health and personal appearance, for though, as yet, open restraint had not been resorted to, she yet felt herself the victim of a species of espionage exceedingly painful to bear. The queen insisted on her presence at court, and her thoughtful countenance not unfrequently drew forth many a sally from Mary, who was by no means deficient in the art

of making cleverly pointed sarcastic speeches, which showed Florence that the great condescension of the queen was little else than assumed.

The thought of St. John's return, too, whose betrothed bride she was, filled her with consternation, for then, unless she had strength of mind to resist, and Mary would well know why she refused to fulfil the contract into which she had entered, what a life she must eventually lead? A hanger-on at the court of Mary, with the image of the queen's betrayed father ever before her eyes, never again to see her adored mistress, but ever to bow before the throne of the queen and pay her homage and obedience. This was the life Florence pictured to herself would be hers, and yet she had no power to break the bonds which bound her.

As to her sentiments, not a word escaped her lips by which Mary could be guided, but her clever, penetrating mind was not far wrong. She saw daily the smile became more languid, the color on the cheek grew paler, the violet eyes would tell a tale of recent tears, and the queen would exult in the power she thought she possessed of forcing on a marriage between parties with whom, strangely enough, the deepest affection was interwoven with strong political feeling, which had hitherto bid fair to destroy that warmer emotion to which we have alluded.

Spitefully, then, did Mary note the changes in her countenance, and on one occasion when Florence seemed buried in deeper thought than usual, Mary observed, as she leant over the embroidery frame, the unbidden tears fall on the gay silks she was forming into flowers. The tones of the queen's voice sounded sharp and imperious, and quickly recalled Florence to the remembrance, for the moment forgotten, of the royal lady in whose presence she sat, and who now commanded harshly rather than requested her to

leave the room on a commission she wished her to execute.

“Minion,” she angrily exclaimed as the girl’s form vanished from her sight, “I will punish you yet for the folly with which you are acting. She positively dares to brave me to my very face, to tell me as plainly as if she did so in words, ‘I am betrothed to St. John, but I will not marry him, and I dread to see him because he is true to you and yours.’ Well, well, we shall see who will be mistress yet, Lady Florence,” said Mary aloud, tapping the floor nervously with her foot, and a small red spot glowing on her cheek, for her exasperation was now at its height, “to St. Germain’s you never shall return, and it will be well for you, should you refuse to wed St. John on his arrival, if the home at Kensington, which our condescension has awarded you, be not exchanged for a chamber in the Tower, if all we hear of this conspiracy, and in which your name is worked up, be found to be correct.”

Then the queen laughed and smiled with pleasure at the thought that she held Florence at her mercy in her gilded prison, and that if she really had meditated a return with Ashton and the others to France, that all her plans were circumvented, and even as her light steps sounded in her ear in the ante-chamber without, she murmured to herself:

“Yes, yes; I will force her to own the truth, and should my will be resisted, there can be torture inflicted, my dainty Mistress Florence, even on limbs as delicate as yours.” Forcing a smile to her lips, for she felt strangely nervous and uneasy, Florence re-entered the queen’s closet, and gracefully bending her knee presented the queen with the article for which she had been sent. For one moment their eyes met, and just for that moment the fine features of Mary wore an expression strikingly like to her unfortunate

father, and for a brief space the girl's fears were lulled to rest, for in that glance there was assumed kindness; and as if anxious to erase from the mind of her *protégée* all remembrance of her recent harshness, the queen endeavored to amuse her by an account of the fine doings with which the New Year would be ushered in at Kensington.

"Alas," thought Florence, "the New Year at hand and I not at St. Germain's."

At this thought her countenance again wore the look of abstraction which so annoyed the queen, and a severe reprimand already trembled on her lips when William of Orange entered the apartment. Instantly rising on the king's entrance, Florence quitted the boudoir.

"Something has disturbed you," said the queen meeting William as he advanced towards her. "Tell me quickly what or who it is that has occasioned you annoyance."

"St. John has gone over to Sarsfield," was the reply, and William's voice was guttural from suppressed passion; "*he*, the recreant, whom I had the most favored; he, on whom I have lavished every mark of esteem, has ungratefully deserted to those who fight for your father."

"No, my beloved, it cannot be possible that you have met with such ingratitude," exclaimed the queen, forgetful in her indignation at the defection of Sir Reginald, of her own and her husband's ingratitude to her father. "Where is he? Has he arrived in England? If so, let him at once be arrested."

"In England, indeed!" replied William; "I would that he were, we would make him feel the weight of our vengeance; it may reach him yet. No, he is with Sarsfield, who has named him his lieutenant, and whose sworn friend he has already become, so says my informant, adding that St. John was indignant at the way in which his name had

been used, and by the mischievous wretch, Benson, having been placed as spy on the actions of Sarsfield."

"And think you he had received our summons to return to England before he threw off his allegiance?" and the voice of the queen was husky and tremulous as she spoke.

"I should think not," was the reply. "Nay, it is almost certain that he must have left headquarters very quickly after his arrival, perhaps immediately. What had we best do with this girl—this O'Neill—on whose account we have summoned him here?"

"Detain her at the palace till we see the issue of the present plot. You, my beloved husband, are obliged almost immediately to leave England. Confide to me the task of unraveling this knotty web, and of severely punishing its ringleaders, however lofty and exalted may be their rank. I shall regard this Florence as a prisoner, but treat her as a favored *protégée*—not allow her to feel her imprisonment in its true light, but watch her very closely nevertheless. I note every change in her expressive countenance and have read every secret of her heart; she only feared St. John's return because she was resolved not to wed him, minion as she is, whilst he was loyal to us. Now she shall know of his disloyalty, because the pleasure she would otherwise feel will meet with a sting in the reflection that she is with me, and that he dare not now claim her for his wife. Really, I enjoy," added the queen, "the thought of the new sorrow in store for this young fool with a fair face who has presumed to make herself the judge as to whether Mary of Modena or myself should be her queen, but enough of her; St. John is rich, is he not? of course you will see that his estates be instantly confiscated to the crown."

"Steps shall be at once taken for that end," said William, his usually grave and calm countenance disturbed as

he mused over the defection of St. John, whom he had really favored beyond many others, "and now be wary and not over-indulgent in my absence," he continued, "for I leave you at the helm of government again, and above all crush this conspiracy immediately; do not hesitate to single out for capital punishment the principal offenders, whoever they may be."

"I will not be wanting, my beloved lord," said Mary, "nor shall I fail to count the days and hours of your absence. Truly," and Mary sighed wearily as she spoke, "my spirits are out of tune at these constant defections, but we must hope the best; our work cannot but be good, as God never fails to send us some little cross."

It is laughable enough certainly, but nevertheless perfectly true, that this princess, at the very moment when she was really engaged in promoting her own interest and that of her fondly-loved consort, by means which were often far from good, and at times positively sinful, would quiet her conscience, or perhaps strive to do so, by endeavoring to believe that it was not her own work she was about, or her own empire she was striving to establish, but rather the work of Almighty God Himself.

Then turning to the king, the usual affectionate parting took place between them, and Mary sought, in the solitude of her own apartment, to devise schemes for bringing wholly within her power those who were at the head of the present conspiracy, amongst whom she numbered, not entirely without foundation, the fair descendant of the O'Neill's.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTIVE.

WHEN Florence left the presence of the queen, she little thought still greater anxiety was in store for her in the fact that Sir Reginald, whose arrival she so much dreaded, whilst she believed him the adherent of the Dutch Monarch, aware that the queen would hurry on her nuptials and retain her at her own Court, was really still in Ireland, and, moreover, that he was fighting in behalf of the rights of James under the command of Sarsfield.

Not long was she allowed to remain in ignorance of his defection from the cause of William; the following morning the queen, who was a much better tactitian than the unsophisticated Florence, chose the time when both herself and the captive, for such the latter really was, were engaged, Florence at the embroidery frame, the queen at the beloved occupation of her leisure moments, knotting fringe, to convey the starting intelligence to her.

Though Queen Mary was an inveterate worker, her busy fingers in no way weakened her powers of governing during the long and frequent periods of the Dutch King's absence, when engaged in carrying on his continental wars, or managing his trans-marine possessions.

But while the queen's head was bent over her everlasting work, the changes in her countenance could not be discerned. She had just parted with William, and her fond heart always ached when this was the case; moreover, day after day some startling intelligence, connected with a new plot, or fresh conspiracies springing out of the old one, in which the unfortunate Nevill Payne had been engaged,

conspired to ruffle and disturb an equanimity of temper which was too often assumed, as on this occasion, when her blood was at boiling heat, concerning the defection of Sir Reginald.

“I have surprising news for you,” she said; “it is not likely Sir Reginald will return to London, if he does, he will be at once consigned to the Tower.”

As the queen uttered these ominous words, she observed Florence start and turn deadly pale, the needle fell from her hand, affection at that moment gaining the day over loyalty to the exiled court at St. Germain's, and on the impulse of the moment, she arose, and casting herself at the feet of the queen, her eyes streaming with tears, she was as one transformed into the suppliant, exclaiming :

“To the Tower, gracious Madam, ah! no, no, what evil hath he done? in the whole realm of England you have not a more loyal supporter of your throne than he.”

“Your betrothed is a traitor to our cause,” said the queen bitterly, “he has taken up arms under the Jacobite General Sarsfield: but why these tears, you exhibited no signs of pleasure when I told you the king had summoned him hither for his nuptials; spare your grief now, I shall attach you to my own person; I do not intend you to leave the court. I shall not be long before I find a more fitting mate for the heiress of the O'Neill's than he would have been.”

Then Mary's handsome face again bent over her frame, and a sickly smile sat upon her lips, for well she knew the woman she tormented was in secret pining to return to St. Germain's. She knew the news of Sir Reginald's defection could bring her no relief, as whilst she was in England it would enforce a separation, also that the quarrel between

them had originated solely in one feeling, that of a deep-seated loyalty to her own dethroned and exiled father.

The queen then exulted in the power she possessed of detaining Florence at court, knowing that whilst she must at heart be pleased at what she had told her, she must sorrow more intensely than ever over her adverse fate that detained her so unwillingly in London.

“We are going to be very gay this winter,” continued the queen, “so put a bright face on the change things have taken; nay do not look so lachrymose, child,” and the queen put forth her hand to assist her to rise, “the king and myself were well pleased to further your interests, by pushing on your marriage with this ungrateful St. John, before he had thrown off his allegiance, so have we those same interests still at heart, consequently, I appoint you from this moment, one of my maids of honor, and promise you a far better spouse than the traitor you have lost; nay, nay, he is not worth your tears,” she added, as they fell on the hand Florence raised to her lips ere she resumed her seat.

Scarcely conscious, indeed, of what she did, she stood for a moment beside Queen Mary's seat, and forgetful of prudence and caution, was about to implore her to allow her to return to France, and have flung back in her face her proffered friendship, but even as the words trembled on her lips, the queen arose, saying:

“Poor Florence, I shall leave you to yourself for the next few hours, during which you must grow resigned to that which you cannot, by any means, amend, and I shall expect you to accompany me to the theatre to-night, as one of my ladies in attendance, nay, not a word, it *must* be,” she added, “I am your best friend in not allowing you to remain long brooding over your sorrow alone:” then as the queen reached the door, she suddenly paused as if a thought

had occurred to her, saying: "by the way, did you not come to England under the care of one Mr. Ashton, formerly one of the gentlemen of the household of—of the late queen?"

As Queen Mary spoke, the expression of her features indicated what was passing in her mind; there was that about her which might well intimidate a young woman trameled as Florence now was. The name of Ashton awakened all her fears, and as she raised her eyes with a troubled expression on her countenance to that of the queen, the very enquiry seemed to paralyze her, besides, she was herself compromised, if the queen knew anything concerning the conspiracy, so she replied at once in the affirmative.

"And you were to return to St. Germain's under his protection in about a week from the present time?"

"Yes, gracious Madam," said Florence, with somewhat more of calmness in her manner, "it was the wish of the queen, my mistress, that I should go back to St. Germain's at Christmas, but Mr. Ashton——"

"Had not completed his arrangements," interrupted the queen in an ironical tone enough, "rumors have reached my ears, implicating himself and others, be thankful that you are safely attached to the English Court, and have nothing more to do with such persons."

As the queen spoke, she hastened from the room, and for a moment Florence stood in the same position, as one dazed and bewildered under some heavy stroke.

Then, almost mechanically, she gathered together the gay silks and gold thread, with which she was embroidering a scarf for the queen, and hastened to her own room.

"Fatal, fatal day," she murmured, "when the rash idea took possession of my poor weak woman's heart, leading me to think that I could benefit those I loved; alas, alas, I

have but brought ruin on my own head, and failed to aid their cause. Ah, Reginald, and my royal master and mistress, what will be your feelings when you hear I am detained at Queen Mary's Court, in truth, but as a captive, whilst she feigns herself my friend."

"Was there no way to escape," she thought, "no, none." Indeed, the only chance for her own personal safety consisted, she felt convinced, in patiently and quietly submitting to the will of the queen, aware that it was extremely possible she might soon find a home in the Tower, were it known that in the slightest way she had interfered in the contemplated rising. She knew too how ruthless and determined the queen had shown herself, that at the period of which we write, on mere *suspicion* of Jacobitism, it was no unusual thing to be apprehended on privy Council warrants, at a theatre, a ball, or a party, and be suddenly consigned to that gloomy fortress, the Tower.

Sensitive, haughty, and imperious, the young heiress of the O'Neill's felt acutely her position; she was to be the constant attendant of the queen, unless some fortuitous accident released her, compelled to dwell with her as her favorite *protégée*, but in reality a prisoner under no very mild surveillance, separated from Sir Reginald, who had now, by his adhesion to James, himself removed the only obstacle that had existed to her union, as well as prevented from ever returning to St. Germain, whilst no small part of her suffering would arise from the necessity she felt existed for hiding it under a cheerful exterior.

For the present, indeed, the queen would excuse her tears, as they might be naturally supposed to flow from her separation from Sir Reginald; this at the very moment, too, when she would have joyfully yielded him her hand.

"A round of dissipation is before me too," sighed she as

she rose wearily from the couch, against which she had knelt whilst giving free vent to her anguish, "and poor Ashton, how will it fare with him and myself, and Lord Preston, if that conspiracy be detected."

Shuddering at the thought of incarceration at the Tower, to which she knew many had been consigned by the queen for lighter suspicion than might rest on herself, Florence then busied herself in the difficult task of schooling her features into calmness, and bathing her eyes, strove to look her misfortunes in the face and bear them as bravely as possible.

CHAPTER XIV.

DETECTION.



THE hands of Queen Mary's watch pointed to the hour of twelve; she had noted the progress of the last half hour very anxiously, as people do when they are expecting an interview with a person on important business. Royalty, however, is rarely kept waiting beyond the time it has appointed, thus it was that two minutes after twelve, a tap at the door of her closet made her aware that the person she had expected had arrived. Von Keppel, the page, entered and spoke to the queen, then left the room and ushered in Mrs. Pratt. Rather a comely woman she was, but with the awe royalty inspires in the uneducated classes, she appeared perfectly petrified when she found herself in the presence of the queen.

Mary, however, knew well how to ingratiate herself with the people, and putting on a smiling countenance, she said :

“I understand you have begged an audience of me, Mrs. Pratt, desiring to speak to me of one Mr. Ashton, who has hired a vessel of some friend of yours, for purposes against the government, though you are told that it is required to carry bales of silk to France; what has led you to disbelieve what you have heard?”

Here the queen paused and fixed her full dark eyes on the woman's face as if she would search the inmost recesses of her heart.

Martha Pratt, while the queen was speaking, had time to overcome her fears, and did not blench beneath the queen's gaze. she replied:

“In the first place, your Majesty, our Ashton was too anxious about the vessel, for he called on me, who have the letting of it, three times; secondly, he offered me five hundred pounds to get my friend Pasely to let him have it at once; and thirdly, because I found from the king's page, that this Mr. Ashton used to be one of the members of the household of the late Popish queen; so when he had gone, after calling the third time, for Pasely had refused him his smack, wanting to send her to Hull, then said I, ‘there's another Popish plot at work, and if Pasely doesn't think so, but after all let him have the vessel, then by all means don't take his money, Martha Pratt, but let the queen's Majesty know all about it.’”

“I commend your prudence, my good woman,” said the queen, “meanwhile, I beg you to keep perfectly silent in this matter, and if it really be as you suspect, I will not fail to more than recompense you for what you will have sacrificed by your loyalty to the king and myself: now leave me, I will send for you again when I have seen further into this business.”

Again alone, Queen Mary walked up and down her

chamber, as one whose mind is ill at ease. Nearly six months since, she had consigned two of her uncles, the brothers of her late mother, to the Tower, along with a large number of the discontented nobility. As to the imprisonment of her own kindred, she talked as pleasantly over this "clapping up," as she did when she robbed her father of his crown.

The queen's position was beset with difficulties, she never possessed a real friend, whilst she was surrounded by enemies in disguise. Of partisans serving her for interest she had an abundance: she had a sister, it is true, a sister who shamefully conspired with herself to expel her father from his throne, and who had even given up her own place in succession to the Dutch Prince, but even-handed justice had brought the poisoned chalice to the lips of the Princess Anne for the way in which she was treated by her sister and brother-in-law; so that with divided interests between the queen and the princess, there was no bond of sisterly affection on which she could lean when apart, as she so often was, from her uncouth and boorish husband.

"And *he* absent now," she says to herself, as she wanders up and down her spacious chamber, "on his way to the Boyne at the time that another plot is on foot for the subversion of our government. That woman Pratt shall be richly rewarded, one of the humbler classes she, but possessing a fund of shrewd penetration rarely to be met with; but now let me call a council without delay," she continued, "nip this plot in the bud, if possible, and prevent this glorious departure to St. Germain's, for that, and no other is the spot whither these traitors are bound." A very few hours later, the agents of the queen's government were on the track of Ashton, Lord Preston, and others connected with the plot for which the young Jacobite, Neville Payne, had been so mercilessly tortured some months previous.

Throughout the whole of that day the enraged queen did not summon Florence to her presence. It was passed partly in the company of her advisers, discussing the manner in which the ringleaders of this new plot, in favor of the restoration of her unfortunate father, should be captured, and in filling the Tower and other prisons with captives who were under suspicion, upon the queen's signature alone.

Slowly the hours passed away, but no summons came to Florence, who had expected to be in attendance on the queen that evening, but suspecting, from her conversation with Mrs. Pratt, that even now the conspirators might have made good their retreat, the queen had weightier matters to engage her attention than passing an evening at the theatre.

"The thirty-first of December," said she to herself, as the winter afternoon drew in, shutting out from her view the spacious gardens of the palace, and the then small village of Kensington in the distance. The snow had fallen heavily throughout the day, and the wind swept in hollow gusts around that wing of the palace in which her chamber was situated, and turning, with a shiver, from the window, she continued: "Ashton must surely have returned to St. Germain's, or be on his way thither, and I am here—here, and know not how to escape, for to leave without permission will be to own that I have cause for fearing I am detained in the light of a prisoner."

Now thinking of Sir Reginald, then of those she loved at St. Germain's, and a weary feeling at her heart on account of the queen's enquiries respecting Ashton, coupled with surprise at not having been summoned to attend her, she became full of apprehension of coming evil. She knew how tyrannical the sway of Mary had been since she had plucked the crown from her father's brow, to place it on her own; that there was not a warm spot in her cold, selfish heart,

save for her Dutch husband; that she had trodden under foot every tender emotion, where the dearest ties were concerned, so that small mercy would be granted to herself should the queen surmise that she had in any way mixed herself up with this new rising.

One after another the hours sped slowly on. She had dismissed her maid, telling her she should dispense with her attendance; and, stirring the fire into a blaze, she threw herself on her knees, seeking to strengthen and fortify herself by prayer, and also by the remembrance of the courage and resignation of the saintly Mary Beatrice, when, suddenly, the dead silence of the night was broken by the sound of some soft substance thrown against the window.

She started, rose from her seat, and listened attentively, when the noise was again repeated, this time somewhat more loudly. Shading her lamp, she advanced with faltering steps to the window, and partially drawing aside the curtain, fancied she could discern the figure of a woman leaning against a tree in the garden beneath. A moment passed in breathless suspense, then she became aware she was recognized, and advancing from the friendly shadow of the tree, the person beneath raised her arm as if again about to attract attention. Cautiously and very gently, for Florence had recognized, by the pale moon-beams which fell on the white waste around, the form of Mrs. Ashton, she opened the casemate, and with true, unerring aim, a small substance, soft, and round as a ball, was flung into her room, and the next moment she had hastily glided away amidst the shadow of the thicket of evergreens. Gently Florence closed the window, and drew her curtain, and afraid, for a few moments, to open the little packet, she fastened her door, waited still a few moments, in case she

should be molested, and full of a deadly fear that her courageous visitor should have been watched.

Not a sound, however, broke the dead stillness of the night, and she proceeded to unfold the little parcel, which consisted of several rolls of wool, compressed together. At last, within the centre of the last roll, her eye fell on a small piece of paper. It had one word written on it, and that was "Danger."

Florence flung it into the fire, and crouching down by the dying embers, buried her face in her hands. Her worst apprehensions seemed about to be verified. She went to bed, but could not sleep, and when at last she sunk into slumber it was disturbed by frightful visions and distressing dreams, the reflection of her waking thoughts.

When the dawn of the winter morning broke at last, it found her with a raging headache, feverish, and utterly unable to rise. She had thought over several plans, and had cast them all aside as impracticable. The most feasible was to make a request to visit Sir Charles, but she feared being the means of drawing him into trouble, as she should inevitably do, did she obtain permission to visit him and fail to return.

Thus it was that the queen was told that indisposition confined Florence to her room.

Danger, in what form would it present itself? Incarceration, such as the queen's tender mercies had inflicted on her own uncle; torture, such as Nevill Payne had undergone; or death itself, which this ungrateful daughter and her Dutch husband had unsparingly inflicted on the unfortunate Jacobites who had attempted to procure the restoration of the exiled James.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAËLLOT—THE EXILES.



IN a spacious apartment, with oaken wainscot and flooring, a few uncushioned chairs of the same, a long table in the wide casements buried in deep recesses in the wall, looking out on the wide expanse of country beyond, the leafless boughs of the trees covered with hoar-frost, for it is mid-winter, two ladies are seated; one is still in the prime of life, the other is middle-aged. The younger of these ladies is tall and elegant in form, her complexion is fair, her hair as black as the raven's wing, the arched eye-brows and long silken lashes that veiled the fine dark eyes were of the same hue, the contour of the face was of a delicate oval, the expression sweet and winning.

The companion of this lady is robed in the garb of a nun. She has not her charm of personal beauty, but the frank, open countenance is pleasing, her figure is upright as when thirty, since she made the vows that bound her to religion. She is the abbess of Chaëllot, and the other lady is the beautiful and hapless ex-queen of England, Mary Beatrice of Modena.

A great consolation in her very sorrowful life must have been her affectionate intercourse with the nuns of Chaëllot.

"Is your majesty well assured that your information comes from a correct source?" asked the abbess, after a pause in their conversation. The calm resignation with which the queen generally bore her great trials had on this occasion given way to the indulgence of a burst of uncontrollable grief. "May we not hope," she continued, "that there may be some mistake in the assertion that your

favorite, Florence O'Neill, is really detained at the court of Queen Mary."

"Alas, no; the news of my informant may be too well relied upon; there can be no doubt of that," was the reply. "Our greatest grief arises from the fact that those most devoted to our interests are, through that devotion, visited with penalties, imprisonment, and death; but when I suffered Florence to leave me to make a short visit in England, I certainly had not the faintest idea that she would ever approach the court, but the missive we have received tells us that not only is she detained there, to all appearances merely as one of the queen's ladies, but that she, in fact, feels herself a kind of prisoner; whilst immediately after Ashton had sailed from London with papers of the utmost importance for the king. The whole plot was discovered, it is suspected, through the instrumentality of the humble persons from whom he hired the vessel. These tidings, in fact, have reached us through my friend, Lady Bulkeley, whose husband writes her that Ashton's wife has adopted some means to make my poor Florence aware that she is surrounded by danger; nay, she must herself be aware that should Mary's suspicions be excited, there is but one step from her presence, and that may be either to the Tower or the grave."

"But," replied the abbess, "with regard to Ashton, it does appear that he had really left London. Then let me beg your majesty to hope the best."

The poor queen shook her head sadly, saying:

"Alas, my good mother, I cannot divest myself of the idea that I shall never more see my brave, good Ashton. I fear that the fury of Mary may be the means of stopping him before he has made way sufficiently to escape the emissaries doubtless on his track. If so, death for himself,

Lord Preston, and others concerned in this rising, must pay the penalty of their loyalty. It does, indeed, seem as if the will of God were against us. That Florence, too, should have fallen into the power of the queen fills my heart with fear. How little did I think when I suffered her to leave me she would ever incur such a risk."

"That young lady has committed an act of imprudence, no doubt," said the abbess. "I wonder was she aware that Sir Reginald had become one of the king's adherents at the time she placed herself in Mary's power?"

"Certainly not. That knowledge, if, indeed, she be acquainted with it, will of itself increase what she must now be suffering."

"Was not Sir Reginald one of William's favorites; will not his property suffer for his defection?"

"Yes, undoubtedly, with all whose loyalty leads them to follow our fortunes," replied the queen; "his property will be confiscated to the crown. Many have followed us to France, and William has, in every instance, outlawed them and confiscated their property. Yet they have preferred exile rather than tears for their allegiance to William and Mary, while amongst those who have remained in England many have rendered proofs of their friendship by refuting the slanders heaped upon my name."

The vile calumnies disseminated by the king's worthless daughters respecting the legitimacy of her son, the Prince of Wales, filled the thoughts of the queen, and those full dark eyes, which Madame de Maintenon described as being always tearful, overflowed as she alluded to this scandal.

"There are times," she added, after a pause, "when we have very little hope; for such is the temper of the nation, my good mother, that it was impossible for the king to do

anything in favor of religion and fail to give disgust.* The time was ripe for the invasion of William; the aspersions cast on the birth of the prince by his half-sisters were all means to the same end, and those who call the king a *weak man*, because that he abdicated the throne—if *that* were his only proof of weakness—do forget that it wanted some courage to go to rest as calmly as he did that night at Whitehall, with the Dutch guards of his traitor son-in-law and nephew about him. It is but a step for kings from the palace to an untimely end. Had he not the fate of his own father present to him, who shall dare say," said the queen, for a time carried away by her feelings, "who shall dare say that private assassination, or imprisonment for life, in one of William's Dutch castles, might not have been his fate? But, my dear mother, I have rambled on without fully replying to your question. Sir Reginald's property will all be confiscated. At present Florence has nothing to lose, but she is the heiress of her uncle, the Sir Charles de Grey of whom you have heard me speak. He is far advanced in years, and it appears he also has managed to get introduced at court. She is also the heiress of the O'Neill's, so that one way or another, should she give offence, no small sum will fall into the hands of William and Mary, as well as landed property to bestow on their parasites. But, hark; there is the bell for Vespers. I will follow you," she added, as the nun rose. "I beg you, in your orisons, not to forget to offer up your prayers for the success of the king's arms at Limerick, and for the welfare of all my family."

"That is an unnecessary injunction, your majesty," and the abbess pressed the queen's hand to her lips as she spoke.

* J. S. Clarke's Life of James II.

“Nowhere are more fervent prayers offered for your prosperity and welfare than by our humble Community of Chaëllot. It is growing dark; I will hasten and send a sister with lights for your Majesty.”

For a few moments after the nun had departed, the queen still lingered, lost in melancholy thought. The embers of the wood fire had burned low in the ample stove, leaving the further end of the apartment enveloped in obscurity, save when ever and again a ruddy glow broke forth, playing for awhile on the dark oaken wainscot and flooring, and then fading away, leaving the obscurity deeper than before.

She walked to the casement and looked out on the scenery beyond the abbey. The whole earth was covered with a snowy garment, the evening wild and stormy, the boughs of the trees around the abbey bent beneath the weight of the snow, which was drifted from their leafless branches by the wind, the sullen sough of which was audible between each peal of the Vesper bell.

The wintry scene was gloomy in the extreme, and the queen, whose heart was sorely oppressed at the news she had received from England, turned away with a weary sigh, and almost, in her present depression of spirits, experienced a feeling akin to fear, as she again seated herself in the large dimly-lighted room, the further extent of which she could not distinguish in the fast increasing darkness.

It was with a feeling of intense relief that, a few moments later, she heard the footstep of the Sister Mary Augustine, who had come with lights. She replenished the fire, and bearing a lamp in her hand, conducted the queen to her own apartments, before she went to the abbey chapel, for she was a constant attendant at the devotional exercises of the nuns when at Chaëllot.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITHOUT HOPE.



THE day following the indisposition of Florence, she was summoned to attend the queen; the latter had vainly endeavored to ascertain if she were at all acquainted with, or had taken part in, the conspiracy. Of one thing she felt assured, and that was, that Florence had really intended to return to France in the vessel hired by the conspirators; had she then been able to discover that she was mixed up with that fatal attempt, her Majesty would have sacrificed her to her wrath with all imaginable calmness.

"I hear that Sir Charles is about to return to the country," she said, after expressing regret at the indisposition of Florence, "I have invited him to the palace in order to spare you, as you are still poorly, the trouble of going thither. The king has been much pleased with his loyal behavior; he has given freely of his wealth towards the defraying of the expenses brought upon our government by these risings of foolish people who wish to overthrow our rule in these realms. How fortunate it is for you, young lady, you did *not* return to France under the conduct of John Ashton and his colleagues."

Florence started and her face turned pale, Mary divined her agitation and its cause.

"Be thankful I have taken you under my protection," she said, "that the Lord, in his mercy, has spared you the sin of mixing yourself up with these evil-doers, and of bringing yourself, perhaps, to the fate which awaits them."

Here the queen paused, and Florence, too shocked, as well as too intimidated, made no reply. Well she knew

that in some way the attempt of the brave Ashton had fallen through, that he was probably even now under arrest, with many others sharing his own fate.

The queen again spoke :

“ You will not be able to return to France for some time, perhaps *never* ; were you still inclined to marry St. John, you would wed an outlaw and a beggar, whose estates are already confiscated to the crown. Here, under my patronage a better destiny awaits you ; there must, however, be no ostentatious display of the principles in which you have been brought up. You will learn in time, I hope, to imitate the example of your aged relative, Sir Charles, who remembers that the Scriptures saith, “ *The powers that be are ordained of God*, wisely render them obedience.”

“ Time server,” thought Florence, the words almost trembling on her lips ; but the consciousness of her own danger kept her silent, and the next moment she remembered that her uncle had not the power to resist William’s demands. The moments passed on like so many hours, sorrow for her uncle, for herself, for Ashton, pressing like a weight of lead upon her heart. The queen was busy at her everlasting knotting of fringe, and Florence almost mechanically proceeded with her embroidery, her eyes blinded by the tears she vainly tried to force back, so that, on laying down her work for a moment, the queen sharply called her attention to the fact, that she had chosen the wrong shades of silk in a Forget-me-Not she was embroidering in her scarf, saying, with a touch of irony in the tones of her voice, as she noticed the particular flower in which the mistake was made,

“ The sooner you get rid of sentiment, maiden, the better, in this world we are forgotten much sooner than we think for, or than one’s self-love likes to admit : depend on

it, the traitor St. John has forgotten you ere now, as well as others, whom your heart vainly aches to see."

Florence had not become a reluctant visitant at the queen's palace, and failed to discover that Mary was arbitrary, exacting, and severe. She had first become aware of these points in her new mistress' character, by her treatment of the princess Anne, which she did not care to disguise even before her ladies, for just at this time the former had given the queen mortal offence by her solicitations for a pension, so as to free her from being the mere dependent on the bounty of her sister and the king, as also in her obstinately keeping her unworthy favorites, the Marlboroughs about her person.

Impulsive and haughty as was the nature of Florence, the restraint imposed on her liberty was fast becoming insupportable, yet she was without hope, humanly speaking: unless Providence interposed in her behalf, she could see no help; to escape to France was out of the question, to seek an asylum with her friends in Ireland, equally impossible; to ask permission to return with her uncle to the country, to the last degree, impracticable; for, by so doing, she should be dragging him into trouble, even brought over as he now seemed to be to the interests of the Prince of Orange. Were he inclined to further her wishes, knowing as she did that, as the queen *chose it to be assumed* that she kept Florence near her from kindly motives, the offence would be instantly taken, and her departure visited on herself, perhaps, by the incarceration the queen so often inflicted on those who offended her.

Meanwhile, to her astonishment, the morning passed over without that visit of the old baronet which Florence had been bidden to expect, and in lieu thereof, came a letter to the queen full of humble apologies, alleging as an excuse

that he was confined to his chamber by an attack of the gout, which would necessarily delay his return to the country. When at length she received her dismissal, it is doubtful if the queen's frame of mind were happier than her own. It was one of those days in which, as she remarked in one of her letters to William, "*she must grin when her heart is breaking.*"*

She was distressed at the news of the conspiracy which had broken out just as the absence of the king had left her at the helm of the government. The quarrel with the Princess Anne was at its height, and she felt an aversion to Florence, whom, nevertheless, she had determined on keeping at her own court, though under a species of *surveillance*, hoping later to extract from her tidings of the movements at St. Germain, and also enjoying the thought that she had separated her from the ex-queen as well as from Sir Reginald.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONDEMNED.



THE agreement concerning the hire of the vessel had been a successful one. The thirtieth of December was agreed upon as the day on which the little party would leave London, and as time went on, Ashton became extremely anxious at neither seeing nor hearing from the young lady, whom he stood pledged to Mary Beatrice to chaperone safely back to St. Germain.

At length he decided on sending a note to Sir Charles, and then heard, to his surprise, that she was detained for an indefinite period at the Court of Queen Mary.

*Dalrymple's Memoirs.

Meanwhile, the day drew nigh, and the perfect silence of Florence warranted the idea on Ashton's part, that she was under a degree of *surveillance* which forbade her from holding any correspondence with him.

There was then no help but to leave Florence in England.

At last the thirtieth day arrived, a murky, gloomy day, a yellow fog laden with smoke hanging over London.

They were to set sail in the evening, if possible, and many earnest prayers were offered, that they might speedily arrive in safety on the coast of France.

One thing excited the surprise of Lord Preston and Ashton, it was that Mrs. Pratt had never appeared to claim her reward for her instrumentality in securing them the hire of the vessel.

At last they bade farewell to all they held dear, and during the first hours of the early winter evening they went on board.

The fog had cleared off, but there was an utter absence of wind, and as they paced the deck in company with a Mr. Elliott, a Jacobite gentleman, who had joined them, and counted the hour of six sound from the clocks of the city churches, they each invariably prayed that a strong wind might ere long waft them on their way. But, alas, there was not sufficient breeze to disturb the thick locks which clustered over Ashton's anxious brow.

After some time spent in earnest consultation, they decided that it would be best to drop the anchor, and after a while, snatch a few hours rest until a favorable wind should perchance arise, either during the night or on the following morning.

Lord Preston's slumbers were deep and heavy, but the sleep of Ashton was far otherwise, his imagination being disturbed by frightful visions; now, he was in the torture

chamber a witness of the cruelties inflicted on his old friend Nevill Payne, then, he was himself writhing beneath the hands of the executioner ; again the scene changed, and he beheld himself separated from his wife and children, and on the point of being led out to suffer capital punishment.

The horror of his dream awakened him, his face was covered with a cold perspiration induced by the terror he had suffered, and it was with no small satisfaction that he beheld the first dawn of morning stealing through the cabin windows. He was also aware by the motion of the vessel that they were on their way from London. Unwilling any longer to risk encountering again the horrors by which his rest had been disturbed, by yielding to the drowsiness he felt, he arose, dressed himself, and going upon deck, perceived to his gratification that they were some way beyond Woolwich. He had not been long on deck before he was joined by Lord Preston and Mr. Elliott.

“And so you could not sleep, Ashton,” said his lordship in answer to Ashton’s remarks, “as for myself, I rested right well. In case of any sudden surprise or mischance, I had before I left home tied a piece of lead to the package entrusted to my care, you know what I mean,” he added significantly, “I put it under my head when I went to sleep, resolved that, on the first intimation of danger, I should throw it overboard, then I troubled myself no more about the matter, and had a good night’s rest.”

“I wish I could say the same, my lord,” was Ashton’s reply. “I know not why our natures should seem changed, but you now possess all the fearlessness which I thought you wanted in the earlier stage of this affair, whilst I am depressed and anxious.”

“Nay, Mr. Ashton,” said Elliott, “pluck up some of your usual spirits. See, a fair wind has sprung up ; we

shall soon be out of the river. What say you both to our going below to breakfast?"

"Agreed," replied his lordship and Ashton, and they remained in the cabin in conversation for some time after they had made their morning meal.

When they returned on deck, they found that the mist of the early morning was gradually dispersing, a fine wind had risen, and everything looked well as far as the weather was concerned, and the cloud on Ashton's brow began to pass away.

"We shall soon be clear of the river," thought he, for they were nearing Gravesend. As he turned in his walk along the short deck of the little bark, so as to face London, he suddenly started. A vessel of good dimensions, and with several men on deck, appeared in sight. He had previously observed it in the distance, but as it gradually became more distinct it assumed the proportions of a large vessel.

It seemed to be following in their own track, and Lord Preston noticed the nervous restlessness with which Ashton regarded its movements.

A little longer, and Gravesend was in sight. It was as fine a morning and as bright a sunshine as ever lighted up the blue waters of old Father Thames on a mid-winter day, and the white sails of the vessel fluttered gaily in the fresh, sharp breeze that wafted them on their way.

But Ashton heeds nothing but this vessel. He stands rivetted, as it were, to the spot, leaning over the deck, and watching intently the movements of the larger craft. He now counts four men on deck, and he fancies he saw many more than these, and that they must have gone below. He is quite convinced, too, that in one of these men he recognizes a Captain Billop, one of the government officers.

Nearer, yet nearer, in ten minutes, or less, they will pass Gravesend.

Nearer, yet nearer, too, comes the stronger vessel. Still, unless it is a feint to deceive those who man the smaller craft, she does not appear as though she were in pursuit.

Seven, five, three minutes, and Gravesend will be reached. A motley group are on the shore watching the vessels as they steer proudly on their way, or stop, it may be, to take up fresh passengers.

The larger vessel is now nearly alongside the smaller one, it is certainly following in her wake. A cold sweat breaks out on Ashton's forehead; Elliott and Lord Preston seem still cool and free from fear. Suddenly Ashton remembered the packet the latter had said he had placed beneath his pillow, and hastens to the cabin to see if he had secured it. There it still was, in the spot Lord Preston had named, and secreting it in his breast-pocket, Ashton again went upon deck, and signed his friends to follow him to the further end of the vessel.

One short moment of intense suspense, the little bark has stopped, she has touched at Gravesend, in obedience to a peremptory command issued by the master of the larger vessel.

Its occupants confer a few moments together. The next moment they are on board of Ashton's little craft, and he knows his hour of trial has come. Approaching the side of the ship, he thrusts his right hand within his breast-pocket, intending to drop over the edge of the vessel the dangerous papers he had unfortunately concealed on his person; but even as he nervously clutches the fatal packet, his arm is withheld by a powerful grasp, and he and his companions are commanded, in the name of King William and Queen Mary, to consider themselves under arrest.

Then came the search, and in Ashton's trunk, concealed amongst his clothes, were found papers containing evidence of the birth of the Prince of Wales.

The packet he had taken from Lord Preston's pillow included letters from the Bishop of Ely, Lord Clarendon, and other persons of rank and consideration, with proposals to King James to reinstate him on the throne if he would undertake to provide for the security of the Church of England, bestow employments on Protestants preferably to Catholics, live a Catholic in religion, but reign a Protestant as to government, and bring over with him only so much power as would be necessary for his defence, and to rid the country of the foreign power that had invaded it.*

Under a strong guard the unfortunate Ashton and his friends were conveyed back to London as soon as the tide served, Lord Preston being sent to the Tower, Ashton and Elliott to a prison. An agonizing fortnight and two days elapsed, and then Lord Preston and John Ashton were tried at the Old Bailey, the indictment setting forth that they were compassing the deaths of their majesties, the king and queen.

In his defence Lord Preston urged that he had no hand in hiring the vessel, that no papers were found on him, that the whole proof against him rested on mere supposition. He was, however, declared guilty.

Ashton was confronted by Mrs. Pratt, she being the chief witness against him. Pale and care-worn, indeed, he appeared as he stood at the dock, hoping nothing that his life would be spared, when he found himself brow-beaten by the bench and the jury, and pretty confident, from the line of defence adopted by the craven-hearted nobleman, Lord Preston, that he was prepared to ensure his own

*Clarke's Life of James II.

acquittal, even if by so doing it procured Ashton's condemnation.

The counsel for the prosecution then set forth that on Ashton's body were found papers containing the whole gist of the conspiracy, being a design to alter the government by a French power and aid; that the letters would be found, when read, to contain a black and wicked conspiracy to introduce and, by means of a Popish interest, settle our laws, liberties, and properties by a French army; and if the plot had taken effect, of course we should have had any religion and laws the French king might be pleased to impose.

When the counsel had concluded, Mrs. Pratt and the other witnesses were called, and after they had given their evidence, Ashton was asked if he had anything to say in his defence?

A breathless silence pervaded the whole court when he began to speak. He behaved with intrepidity and composure, though several times contemned by the bench. He solemnly declared that he was ignorant of the contents of the papers that had been found on his person, complained of having been denied time to prepare for his trial, and called several persons to prove him a Protestant of exemplary piety and irreproachable morals.

It was of no avail; the papers, it was insisted, had been found in his possession, and though it is an axiom of the boasted English law that no man shall be deemed guilty till he has been tried, the judges and the jury had, however, convicted him in their own minds from the first, and sentence of death was accordingly passed against him.

The reaction took place when poor Ashton was removed to the goal, and received the visit of his distracted, heart-broken wife. Elliott was acquitted, without a trial, there being no evidence against him.

CHAPTER XVIII

LORD PRESTON'S REVELATIONS.



THE trial was over, but great alarm was felt by the queen and the government at the amount of disaffection betrayed by the conspiracy, which proved to have grown out of that in which Nevill Payne had suffered.

The queen was at Windsor for a couple of days, and, on rambling into St. George's Gallery, was surprised to see a lovely little girl, about nine years of age, standing there, and more surprised at her employment.

Mary had entered the gallery unheard and unperceived by the child, who stood before a full length portrait of James the Second, gazing at it with wistful and tearful eyes.

Struck by the expression of the little girl's face, the queen said to her :

“What do you see in that picture, child, that makes you look at it so attentively?”

The child looked up fearlessly in Mary's face, recognized the queen, and replied :

“I was thinking how hard it is *my* father should die for loving your's.”

The little girl had been left in the queen's apartments during the trial, for her father had held the post of chamberlain to James, and had not been formally dispossessed of his office when the conspiracy broke out.

The little lady Catherine did not lose her father; his life was spared that he might betray others. The following day he appeared before the queen, and she held out hopes of pardon to him.

“Declare to me, Lord Preston, the names of the ring-

leaders of this plot ; render this service to the government, and it may, perhaps, be that you may save your own life by so doing."

Equally guilty in the eye of the law with those whom he was about to denounce, he was saving his own life by betraying his friends, a deed which cost poor, obscure, upright Nevill Payne his life, because he would not commit what he considered to be a dishonorable action.

No wonder that he hesitated, and that the glow of shame mantled his cheek.

"Speak out, my lord, or the consequences of your obstinacy be on your own head," said the queen. "We have resolved to have recourse to the severest measures to establish peace and root up these plots against our government. I command you to speak, or Ashton's fate shall be yours ; remember, a jury of your country have declared you guilty."

"Forgive me, your Majesty ; if I faltered, it was out of compassion for what they will have to suffer."

"Leave that consideration to us, my lord ; all reasonable clemency will be shown to those who choose to avail themselves of it. Give me up the names at once."

"I have talked on the subject of the late king's restoration with Lord Clarendon" (the queen started, though she knew long since there was disaffection very near herself), "the Bishop of Ely, William Penn, and many others whose names I will give in to your majesty this very day."

"And what know you of this Ashton ?"

"He made every arrangement connected with the conspiracy ; arranged the meetings at his own house, engaged the boat ; he has been in the habit of conveying letters to and fro to St. Germain's, under assumed names."

"And has any lady been connected with this conspiracy,

a young lady," added the queen, "who is warmly attached to the late queen? Can you tell me if such an one has been in any way worked up with this rising?"

Lord Preston again hesitated to betray a woman, it was against all the rules of gallantry; but the generally even-tempered queen was getting exasperated, and she exclaimed:

"Speak, sir; has Florence O'Neill had anything to do with this affair, is she privy to it?"

"I met her once at Ashton's house, your Majesty; but, then, you know, she has known him for years. He brought her over to England, and she was to go back to France under his protection."

"To the Tower, rather," muttered the enraged queen. Then turning to Lord Preston, she said: "You may go, my lord; I have signed your pardon, and let this act of clemency on our part teach you not to offend again; see that you do not abuse it."

The noble lord, who had thus basely purchased his own forgiveness by the betrayal of those of whom he had himself been a willing accomplice, and by so doing saved his life, was profuse in his thanks, and then, bowing profoundly, left the queen to her own reflections.

"And so it is just as I thought; this disaffection is, indeed, widely spread," she murmured. "My Lord Bishop of Ely, and you, my Lord Clarendon, uncle or no uncle, in the Tower you shall remain; but we dare not meddle with others of the nobility of whom he has promised to send in the names, but, as the king said before he left, we must win them over, by a seeming clemency, to our interests. As for Ashton, he shall be made an example of, and that within a day or two. He will be the first to suffer capital punishment for rising against us, and his death will strike terror into others. As for you, my young mistress Florence, I will clap you up in the Tower before the week is out."

During that morning a letter came to Florence from her uncle, intimating that he was much worse, and expressing a wish that she would immediately pay him a visit.

Taking the letter with her, Florence sought the queen. The latter had not long since closed the interview with Lord Preston, but was too great an adept in the art of disguising her real feelings, to discover what they were, and without any difficulty, Florence obtained permission to be absent from the palace during the day.

Within an hour of her leaving Whitehall, where the queen was then staying, she had reached her uncle's home at Kensington, and though distressed to see him looking far from well, she was, nevertheless, rejoiced that he was not as bad as the tenor of his letter had led her to expect.

The chief cause of his disquiet appeared to be his prolonged absence from the country.

"Losing all this glorious weather for hunting, too," he said, "moored up here in this dreary place instead of being out with my hounds and my fellow-sportsmen, and my money dragged from me to a pretty tune to help this Dutch prince carry on his wars and butcher his neighbors, whilst I never helped my good sailor king with a pound. Ah, Florence, Florence, 'twas a bad day for us both when Sir Reginald persuaded me to come up to this vile London, and—"

Here, however, poor Sir Charles came to a stop, and made a grimace indicative of severe pain.

"My dear uncle," said Florence, "what difference can it make to you whether you are at Morville or near me; you are as well attended to here, and occasionally I can have the comfort of seeing you. Besides, uncle," she added, trying to repress a smile, "how could you hunt with that gouty leg?"

"Gout, or no gout, I tell you I hate the place," was the Baronet's reply. "I was dragged up here, I now see, for

nothing but to open my purse to help that boorish, uncouth Dutch prince, who only cares for this country for the money he can get out of it; and who will draw the nation into misery and debt enough before it has done with him. But serve the people right; serve them right," he continued, with increasing irritation, "they have got their Protestant liberty, they have got their accursed penal laws, which they hated poor James for trying to put down, and they've got William and Mary, and the country loaded with debt into the bargain; they've got the lash in the army and navy, and all sorts of villainies besides, and I wish I was a young man again. I would,"—and here the exasperated Baronet shook his stick defiantly in the air—"I would not lead the sluggish life I *have* led, but would be one of the first to fight for the good old stock. By the way," he added, after a pause, and suddenly becoming more placable, "hast heard anything of that unfortunate fellow, Reginald; that descendant of a cross-eared, puritanical, canting knave, who has now become a roystering Jacobite?"

"Not a word, dear uncle," said Florence; and dropping her fair head on her uncle's shoulder, she gave free vent to her long pent-up feelings by a violent burst of tears.

"Halloa, halloa, what means this, my poor child?" said the old man, kissing her fervently, as he spoke. "Why, what an old fool I am, to forget she was betrothed to the poor fellow. Come, cheer up, Florence, remember the old saying, the 'darkest hour is nearest the dawn.'"

"But uncle, dear," and, as if afraid the very walls should hear, the girl lowered her voice almost to a whisper, "I am almost in a state of captivity at the palace; I had to get permission even to see you. I cannot hear from any of those I love, it is impossible; nor can I get to them, and I fear, uncle, poor Ashton has fallen into trouble, for

the other night I saw Mrs. Ashton in the grounds beneath my window, and she flung a little packet in my room, in which was written the word: 'Danger!' The queen, too, has said strange things, questioning me about him, so that I think he can never have got off to France."

"Dear child, you can do no good; the action was wrong; Mrs. Ashton should not have come near you. Promise an old man, who has seen much of the world, that you will not meddle with these matters. In his own good time, God will lead you out of this Babylon into pleasanter places. Promise me this, Florence," and as the old man spoke he stroked her golden hair with his withered hand, saying, as if to himself, "How like her mother at her age; God rest her soul," and then the hand of the aged man was raised to make the holy sign of redemption.

"Yes, I will be very careful, uncle dear, and now tell me at what hour do you dine?"

"At all hours, at any hour, my darling; good Mrs. Walton is so very careful a nurse that she is bringing me delicacies all day long. What shall I order for you, love? a fowl and ham, and a nice pasty? A hamper of venison came up from Morville last night, and they tell me it is in fine condition. But why anxious about the dinner hour, did you not say you could spend the whole day as you pleased?"

Florence flushed up a little at her uncle's question, and replied not without a little hesitation:

"Yes, uncle dear, but I have a call to make in Covent Garden, and I get out so rarely alone. See now, I will not be away more than from two to three hours; your carriage can take me back to the palace about nine at night, and shall drive me now as far as I am going. It is just noon, and if I get back, as I will, between two and three, we shall still have many hours together."

“Well, I suppose it must be as you say; but mind, Florence, take my advice, be very prudent in all your actions;” here the Baronet gazed steadfastly at his niece, as if he doubted her on that point, and then added: “never forget that you are at the Court of Mary, *the daughter* who has not spared her own father in her restless ambition. *You* she would crush as a worm beneath her feet; heads as fair and young as thine, my love, have fallen beneath the headsman’s axe, as you well know. Such an end to you would bring those who love you in sorrow to their graves.”

For a moment Florence faltered in her purpose; but only for that brief period of time did the picture the old man had so graphically drawn lead her to waver. The next, her resolve was taken; she was supported by the heedlessness and daring spirit of youth.

She was determined to visit Ashton’s wife.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONDEMNED CELL.



HERE is no one on the watch; so far, well,” said Florence to herself, as she stepped into her uncle’s carriage, having ordered one of the footmen to see that she was set down at a certain spot in the Strand, at the same time signifying that the carriage need not wait.

“The place is wofully near to the palace,” thought she, as she stepped out of the carriage at the spot she had named; and at that moment observing a couple of men pass with a sedan chair, she without hesitation stepped in and drew the curtains closely to, having first given the direction to Ashton’s house.

The street in which it was situated was perfectly empty when she arrived at her destination. A heavy winter rain had begun to fall, and driven to the shelter of their homes all who were not compelled to be on foot.

The men who had carried the chair she desired to wait, telling them she would pay them liberally for their time and trouble.

The old servant whom she had seen on her former visits answered the door. She was bathed in tears, her whole appearance betokening excessive grief, whilst from the partially open door of a small parlor came forth the sound of sobs and lamentations.

"Is Mrs. Ashton within?" said Florence, in a loud voice, remembering that this woman was very deaf.

Her voice was recognized, the mistress of the house herself appeared; her eyes were swollen with weeping, her hair was disordered, her limbs trembled with excessive agitation. At her side, clinging to the skirt of her dress, was a little girl, about the same age as Lord Preston's child, but alas, the nobleman's life was spared to betray his accomplices and show up the windings of the plot, whilst the more humble-minded and upright Ashton was to be made the victim to strike terror into the hearts of others.

"Dear Mrs. Ashton, what is the matter?" said Florence, a chill striking to her heart, though she was very far from guessing at the worst, her fears only pointing at present to betrayal and imprisonment.

"Oh, madam, madam, my poor husband," was the only reply; but the little girl looked up in the face of Florence and faltered out between her sobs:

"They are going to kill my poor papa."

"Good God, ah! no, Mrs. Ashton," said Florence, "do not tell me this?"

“Madam,” said Mrs. Ashton, endeavoring to speak through her sobs, “my poor husband was arrested before he got out of the river. By his own request, I apprised you by the only means in my power of our danger. He was tried on the 14th, and Oh! my God, on the morning of the 20th, has the queen decreed I am to be widowed, and my children left without a father.”

It was sometime before Florence could speak. To offer comfort at such moments as these is worse than useless; the blows coming, too, so suddenly on Florence had the effect of, for a time, throwing her in a state of bewilderment.

Suddenly she rose from her seat.

“I must see my poor friend once more, Mrs. Ashton,” said she.

“What, madam, what was it you said? Ah, no, my good young lady, it is impossible for you to see him. Ashton has been in the greatest distress for you amidst his own sorrow, since he found you were detained at the Court of that wicked woman. Indeed, indeed, you must not think of such a thing.”

“But indeed I shall, Mrs. Ashton,” said Florence. “A chair waits for me at the door of your house; I have little time to lose, by three I must be back at Kensington.”

“My dear young lady, if ill consequences follow this visit, as is more than likely, you must take them on yourself. Will you promise that you will tell my dear ill-fated husband that I dissuaded you by all the means in my power?”

“Certainly I will, and now where is he; every moment is of consequence to me?”

“Stay, madam, have a little regard for your own safety. A thought occurs to me; you have the advantage of me in

height, nevertheless, you can wear one of my black dresses. As I am in mourning, it will be a nice disguise. Let me go out in the blue dress you wear and tell the men you want the sedan chair for a friend; then put my veil and cloak over the black dress, such as I wear when I visit my poor husband, lest there should be any evil-disposed person near my house, for, I have no doubt the emissaries of the queen watch it closely. When you can return, you can slip on your own dress, and I will see that a carriage be in readiness by half-past two to take you back to Kensington; and may God, my dear young lady, preserve you from danger."

As Florence had purposely kept her veil down since she left her uncle's house, the ruse succeeded with the men, and she entered her chair unquestioned. Mrs. Ashton had desired them to drive to the Old Bailey, and then wait there till again wanted.

A death-like chill came over Florence when she again took her seat in the chair; the shock itself had been so sudden, the risk she was herself running of no light nature, and, unfortunately, she had motioned aside the glass of wine Mrs. Ashton had pressed her to take, and now felt in want of a restorative. She felt marvellously as if she was about to faint, but by a violent effort rallied, so as to be able to continue her journey.

At length she reached the prison, and giving the men a handsome fee, bidding them wait her return, she obtained admittance. Never removing her veil, and avoiding too close a scrutiny, as well as obtaining a pass by the most easy way, that of money, she was the more readily mistaken for Mrs. Ashton, and passed unquestioned, a painful sense of terror and depression on her mind as, attended by the warden, she hastened through the long narrow stone passages, through which the grey dusky light of the winter day scarcely penetrated.

At length they stopped at a low-arched door, similar in appearance to many they had passed by, and unlocking it, the man said :

“ Now, Mrs. Ashton, you must not exceed half an hour ; you have already been here once to-day ; I shall come for you when the half hour is up.”

Her disguise, then, was complete ; she had not been taken for other than she whom she personated.

“ Elizabeth, my wife, why here again ?” said poor Ashton, himself deceived ; “ remember our poor children, and leave me, love, to the resignation I have implored God to bestow.”

“ Oh, Ashton, Ashton, has it then come to such a pass as this,” said Florence, throwing aside the long thick veil which had screened her features. “ Alas, alas, I feared you had not got to France, but never dreamed of such woe as this.”

“ Madam, is it possible *you* are here ? Oh, leave me, leave me ; one such step as this known, and you are undone. My poor Elizabeth, I see, has lent you her clothes. Oh, my Elizabeth, that was indeed wrong.”

“ No, Mr. Ashton, it was right. Your wife found I was obstinate in my wish to see you once again. I would take no denial, Ashton. What will *they* say when they hear you have died in *their* cause ?”

“ They will say, young lady, that the will of God was against us, and they will try to be resigned. I shall pray for my dear master and for my beloved mistress with my latest breath. But, dear young lady, this is no fit place for you. I do beg you again to return home as speedily as possible.”

Florence did not speak for a few moments. She sat down upon his miserable truckle bed, and burying her face in her hands, her tears fell fast.

Ashton saw them trickle through her fingers, he beheld her whole frame shook by the violence of her emotions. Again he essayed to arouse her; her grief unmanned him it was so violent, it was pitiable to behold it.

“Madam, dear young lady,” he said, in a whisper, “for God’s sake, for the sake of the unfortunate man who stands before you, command your feelings, and leave this terrible place. It will soothe my last moments, the remembrance of the friendship of a lady filling the position you occupy, and it pleases me to believe that the day will come when you will be able to tell the king and queen that I was true to them to the last, and that by reason of my truth I am called on by the world to suffer. But it is ever thus, young lady, yet in a few short hours all will be over, this mortal coil will be violently wrested away by the hands of others, and, Oh! glad thought, I shall have put on immortality.”

Florence ceased weeping, and fixed an admiring gaze on this martyr of loyalty, as the non-jurors justly considered him.

His countenance was wan and haggard by the distress of mind he had suffered; his dark hair hung in tangled locks over his open brow, his voice was hollow and his eyes sunken by the tears he had shed, not for himself, but for his helpless wife and children, and the failure of the cause in which he had been engaged.

But resignation, fortitude, magnanimity, heroism there remained, and the power of the undying mind survived the wreck of the shattered mortal frame.

“And now, young lady, I have something to give you, and also something to ask, as you *have* honored my dismal cell with a visit, to your own imminent danger. I have here a copy of a paper I have drawn up to leave in the hands of a friend. I beg you to read it, and when at

length you revisit St. Germain's give it to the king. As to the request, I scarce know how to make it; it is a bold one to ask of so young a lady."

"Name it, my good Ashton; if anything within my power I will gladly comply with it."

"You are a rich heiress, madam; dare I ask you if you will pay for the education of my little daughter, Maud?"

"Right gladly, my dear friend. Moreover, I pledge myself to her brave and suffering father to look to Maud's well-being when the years of childhood shall have passed; Maud shall be with me, shall live with me. My friend, have no care for her. The boy, too, shall not be left unprotected, and—your wife, that Elizabeth you love, have you any request to make on her behalf?"

"I commend her fearlessly, Madam, to that God who chasteneth whom He loveth. Elizabeth will bend for a time beneath the stroke, but the same all-healing time will bring the consolation."

"When I return to St. Germain's, your Elizabeth shall go with me. Have you aught more of earthly care upon your mind?"

"No wish remains ungratified, dearest Madam; no care save the fear that evil will befall yourself."

"God will protect me. Hark, the half hour has expired, and the warden comes. Farewell, gallant John Ashton, a long farewell, and may the God of all peace support you."

The key turned in the lock, and Florence did not dare look on Ashton again. She heard him sob aloud as she left the cell, and with the tears falling thick and fast under her veil, she retraced her steps, passing out from the gloomy prison back to the clatter and din without its dismal gates.

For some time after she had regained her chair her tears continued falling; then, remembering the paper Ashton had given her, she opened it and read as follows:

*Being suddenly called to yield up my accounts to the Searcher of all hearts, I think it a duty incumbent on me to impart some things which neither the iniquity nor interests of these times will, I conclude, willingly bear the publication of, and, therefore, not fit to be inserted in the sheriff's paper.

Some time after the Prince of Orange arrived here, when it was expected that, according to his own declaration, and the king's letter to the Convention, an exact search and enquiry was to have been made into the birth of the Prince of Wales, there was a scheme of the whole matter drawn up, and of the proofs that were then and are still ready to be produced, to prove his royal highness' legitimacy; but no public examination being ever had, and the violence of the times, as well as interest of the present government, not permitting any private person to move in it, these papers have ever since lain by.

But it being now thought advisable by some to have them printed, and as they were at first designed, addressed to the Lords and Commons, entreating them to enquire into that weighty affair, and to call forward, examine, and protect, for who else dares to appear, the many witnesses to the several particulars therein affixed to be legally proved, I was ordered to carry these papers to the king, my master, for his inspection, that his leave and approbation might go along with the desire of his good subjects here, and they being taken with me, with some other papers of accounts in a small trunk, amongst my linen and other private things of my own, *and not in the packet*, by this means fell into the hands of our present governors.

They waived the producing of them as evidence at my trial, yet have I just reason to believe my greatest crimes were contained therein.

Having read this document, Florence concealed it in her bosom, wisely resolving to consign it to the care of Mrs. Ashton whilst she continued a resident at the court.

On her arrival at the house she speedily changed her dress, and told her that, sad as the interview had been, she felt gratified that she had seen her husband, also that she was to take what steps she pleased with regard to her chil-

*Papers left by Ashton in the care of a friend.

dren, for the expenses of whose education she would make herself chargeable, and requested her when she had any communication to make, to convey it to her through the means of her uncle.

Amidst many tears and the warmest expression of thanks, Florence then left the house in a coach which Mrs. Ashton had provided for her use. It was just three o'clock when she re-entered her uncle's chamber.

She was pale, tearful, dispirited ; how could it be otherwise ?

The only circumstance in the whole sad affair that cheered her up was the knowledge that she had been able to do an act of charity, and thereby to soothe poor Ashton's last hours.

It was impossible, however, to deceive her uncle. He handed her a glass of wine. She thankfully accepted it, but her hand shook as she held the glass, and then setting it down untasted, she burst into tears.

" Florence, my child, what is the matter ? " said the old man, much alarmed. " You are faint and ill ; you have waited too long for your food, I will order refreshments immediately. I have longed so to see you back. I have been wishing I could get you here to live with me, but without the chance of giving offence in high quarters ; it cannot be done, however. "

" Oh, that I could ! Oh, that I could ! " said Florence, passionately, wringing her hands.

" But what has happened to distress you so since you left me this morning ? " enquired her uncle.

" Oh, uncle, Ashton is to be executed at the Old Bailey the day after to-morrow, and I knew nothing of it till I called on his wretched wife. "

" But I did, my child, and I hid it from you purposely.

But, my love, did you not tell me you would be prudent, and yet you went straight from me to poor Ashton's house, the last place you should have gone to, and you attached to the court."

Fearing the effect it might have on her uncle, Florence did not tell him of the visit she had paid to Ashton himself. Moreover, in case of harm happening to her, she judged it best that he should be able, if questioned, to declare, with a safe conscience, that he did not know what her movements had been during her absence from his house.

At length she rewarded his care and solicitude by brightening up a little, ate her dinner with composure, took wine with him, and sang him one or two favorite songs, and when she took leave of him late in the evening he was gratified at seeing her as cheerful, apparently, as when she came to visit him in the morning.

CHAPTER XX.

THE QUEEN'S ESCAPE.



THOUGH possessing some strength of mind and courage in no small degree at the same time, I do not want it to be inferred that the heiress of the O'Neills was what the world terms a strong-minded woman. For instance, she could not resist the wish of seeing poor Ashton once more, though at the same time she incurred the chance of putting her own head in the halter by so doing. She was naturally timid, and, like many of her sex nowadays, with not much of the cardinal virtue of prudence; and when she had committed an imprudent action, a corresponding fear followed, as a

matter of course. Disguised as Mrs. Ashton, she had obtained access to the dreary prison, had bade him a last farewell, had passed the warden of the gaol without, apparently, attracting observation; had returned to Mrs. Ashton's in the chair which had carried her to the prison, and in the privacy of her hapless hostess' house had changed her dress, and then returned to her uncle, and from his mansion to the palace, without let or hindrance from any person whatsoever.

Yet a strange, indefinable fear that her footsteps had been dogged, and her visit to the prison consequently detected, filled her mind. There was a constraint about the queen, too, on the following day, such as she had not previously observed. Perhaps the idea was born out of her own fear, but her impression was that she was exerting herself to refrain from some severe exercise of power or manifestation of anger.

Nevertheless the queen, whom indisposition confined to her room, dismissed all her ladies but Florence, and on this evening was more particular than ever in her enquiries about the court at St. Germain's, asking questions which Florence found it very difficult to answer truthfully, and fail to discover matters which it was not well should be known at the English court.

After she had retired to her chamber for the night, she revolved in her mind for a long time the horrors attendant on poor Ashton's execution on the next morning, and the grief of his wife, and at the same time an intense feeling of disgust and aversion stronger, if possible, than she had yet felt took possession of her soul for William and Mary.

Casting herself on her knees, she prayed long and earnestly that the merciful God would support Ashton in his last moments, and open some avenue by which she

might be restored to her friends, also for him still so dear to her, to whom she was betrothed, for the court at St. Germain, and that God would touch the heart of queen Mary. Then feeling more calm and collected, she prepared herself for rest. But the excitement of the previous week, and the harrowing scene at the prison still so vividly in her recollection, did not by any means pave the way for a quiet, peaceful night.

Ashton was still present in her sleeping hours, the scene of his trial enacted over again ; Ashton as she had last seen him, subdued and sorrowful, and full of a holy resignation. Anon the scene changed, but it was still Ashton. This time he is going to pay the last penalty of the law. The terrible gibbet is before her eyes, the gallows is erected, she hears the noise of the hammers as the workmen adjust the dreadful apparatus, and she started up in her bed, the horror of her dream awaking her. Her face was bathed in a cold perspiration, and she glanced half in fear around her spacious chamber, almost trembling lest she should be confronted by some spectral vision of Ashton's pale thin face, which had haunted her ever since she had seen him in prison.

But, no ; the silvery moon-beams light up the room, and though there is nothing extraordinary to be seen, still another sense, that of hearing, is now painfully on the alert, for she hears a noise from which was doubtless born that which had haunted her troubled slumbers.

She sat up in her bed, and bent forwards in the attitude of one who listens intently ; and, at the same moment, a small Blenheim spaniel, which always slept on her hearth rug, leaped on the bed, howling piteously.

"Ah, gracious heaven," she said to herself, "I am right ; that noise is the crackling of wood, and the sagacious little animal warns me of danger."

The next moment, Florence had leaped from her bed, the air was already hot, the oaken flooring on which she stood felt warm, and had, doubtless, alarmed the instinct of the dog.

She hastily threw on a dressing-gown, put her feet in her slippers, snatched some valuable trinkets which lay on the table, and rushed from her room, closely followed by her dog.

Her chamber was on the same side of the palace as the queen's apartments: she had no thought but to save her life. A thrilling shriek burst from her lips, for she was aware now she was in the gallery, that the next suite of apartments was in flames, and with the speed of an affrighted fawn, she fled to the queen's room, giving the alarm as she hurried onwards.

Mary was buried in a heavy sleep as Florence entered her room. This was no time for idle ceremony, the devouring element was within a few paces of the queen's chamber.

"Awake, madam, awake," shrieked the affrighted girl. "Here, lean on me," she added, dragging the queen, still half asleep, from her bed. "Hasten for your life, we may not yet be in time, for we must go back the way I came."

The queen, still scarcely conscious, was thus half through the gallery, before a knot of ladies and servants had found their way to her chamber, and the fire had made such progress that it was with difficulty they escaped with their lives.

In her night dress only, the queen was hurried into St. James' Park, still leaning heavily on the arm of her young maid of honor, the whole Park lighted up by the bright red glare from the burning palace.

Accompanied by the ladies attached to her person, the distressed queen made her way hastily along in the direction of St. James' Palace in this pitiable condition. But she

was doomed to suffer still more mortification on this memorable night.

An immense throng of persons had, by this time, assembled, and a cry of "The queen, the queen," was raised, as Mary crossed the Park on her way to the Palace of St. James.

Amongst these persons were two gentlemen, Sir John Fenwick and Colonel Oglethorpe: they were both warmly attached to the interests of her father.

The bright red glow from the burning palace revealed to them the pale features of her Majesty, who was speechless with fear, and the suddenness with which she had been dragged from her bed. For naturally a very heavy sleeper, she had not been aroused by the shrieks of Florence, or the speedy alarm that had followed them. Indeed, she was, so to speak, but half asleep when hurried out of her chamber.

Sir John and the Colonel followed her through the Park, on her way to the Palace; it was too good an opportunity for these steady adherents of her father to let slip by without telling the queen the truth. Accordingly they reviled her with many hard words, they bade her remember that her filial sins would come home to her, sooner or later "and notoriously insulted her," says another manuscript authority.*

Doubtless, her savagely unfeeling conduct when she took possession of this very palace, the principal portion of which was consumed on that night, was still fresh in their minds, together with her shameful refusal to let her father have his personal wardrobe, or to restore to her unfortunate step-mother the cabinet of silver filligree which she had asked for.

* Birch M. S., British Museum.

The long gallery was burnt, together with most of the royal apartments, with those of the king's officers and servants, and many invaluable portraits and treasures.

At length, overcome with terror, shame, and vexation, the queen reached the palace, and rooms were immediately prepared for her and her ladies, but to think of sleep again, during that terrible night, was out of the question.

The reproaches levelled at her in the Park, in the presence of others, were the more painful on account of their truthfulness. She was much dismayed, too, by the loss occasioned by this disastrous fire, as well as really ill from fright and exposure to the night air.

On the following day she kept her room. The next morning she sent for Florence. "I have very much to say to you, Florence," said the queen, in a cold, frigid tone of voice. "I will commence by observing that you are too young, methinks, to take so much upon yourself, as you have done; there are many now in the Tower, and there are some who have been condemned to death for far less than you have been guilty of. Nay, do not start and turn pale, child, but hear me out. It has come to my knowledge that you have presumed to mix yourself up with the conspiracy, for which Mr. Ashton has, this morning, suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Nay, even whilst you have been about our person, and enjoying our patronage, you took the opportunity of a visit to your aged uncle, to disguise yourself, and seek Ashton in his prison but two days before his execution. I would ask if you have come here to help, by your puny efforts, those malcontents whom I am resolved to crush by the strong arm of the law; if so, why should I not do by you as I do by others."

The tone of contempt, assumed by the queen, stung Florence to the quick; but she was wholly in the queen's power, and she replied:

“Gracious madam, I knew the unfortunate Ashton well. I crave your forgiveness for my stolen visit to him, but though I was aware I incurred the risk of your displeasure, I could not resist the desire I felt, once again, to visit him, before he suffered a violent death.”

“Nor could you resist, young mistress, the wish to combine with those who have but suffered their just deserts. You have been within an ace of committal to the Tower; know you why you are pardoned? I will tell you,” continued the queen, “because you risked your own life to save mine on the night of the fire. On that night when I dismissed you, I had resolved to sign a warrant for your committal to the Tower on the morrow. Moreover, by your acts you have laid yourself open to the loss of the estates you will inherit from your uncle, and from Miss O’Neill. But my pardon is full and entire: in any other person’s case, within the whole of our kingdom, their lands would be forfeited to the crown, for far less contumacious behavior than your own. I forgive you, Mistress Florence, in memory of the night on which you periled your life to save my own.”

It was as a part of the creed of Florence, to feel aversion for the princess who had usurped her father’s throne. Nevertheless, she felt, at that moment, an attraction to the queen such as she had never before experienced; for well she knew, from the recent execution of Ashton, how unsparingly she had inflicted death itself on those who had presumed to aid her hapless father towards the restoration of his rights. At that moment, too, the expression which had so often reminded Florence of the unfortunate king, flitted across his once beloved daughter’s face. For a brief period, she felt drawn towards the queen, whilst she expressed her gratitude for the full pardon she had received, and her happiness that it had been in her power to aid her.

“And now I expect, Mistress Florence, that you will make yourself contented in my Court, and mix yourself up with no affairs of state in future, for rest assured, whatever you may think of the matter, you are no strong-minded heroine, but a very timid one, imprudent and rash withal; and whilst you can do no possible good to those you love, may do very much mischief to yourself. As things now are, Mary of England cannot be unmindful of one to whom she doubtless owes her life, but had there been no fire at Whitehall, your own would have been in danger; or, let us say your liberty,” she added, as though half sorry she had intimated the word “life,” for a warm flush had mantled the cheek of Florence, as she thought of the peril she had so narrowly escaped.

Many conflicting feelings agitated her mind when she found herself in the solitude of her chamber. That Mary had had much to pardon in her conduct was no doubt, any more than the fact that the breaking out of the fire had been a providential thing for her; for well she knew the queen would have made good her threat. Then again came the question, how had Mary found out that Florence had mixed herself up with the plot, for which Ashton suffered; and, at last, she did not like to think he had been so craven-hearted as needlessly to mention her name. She could not help criminating Lord Preston, and her suspicion was a correct one, and she came also to the not unlikely conclusion that emissaries of the government were actively employed in tracing out the movements of all those who were known to be of the Jacobite party; and that Mary’s suspicions once excited, it was no very difficult matter to discover *how* she had spent her time on the day in which she left the palace avowedly only to visit her uncle.

That the young lady’s pride and self-love was deeply


wounded by the almost pitying and contemptuous language the queen had chosen to use, there was little cause for wonder, but she was compelled to own to herself that she was no match for Mary, and that it were wise to submit with a good grace, seeing that the queen had full power to do with her as best pleased herself.

Well was it for her that the confusion on the morning following the fire had put out of her head poor Ashton's execution.

The scene with his wife and children on the previous evening had been heart-rending, but he died with courage and magnanimity.* He gave a paper to the Sheriff, in which he owned his attachment to King James, witnessed to the birth of the Prince of Wales, denied that he knew the contents of the papers that had been found upon him, complained of the hard treatment he had met with from the judges and declared that he forgave them before heaven.

CHAPTER XXI.

THORNS IN THE DIADEM.

AS Mary of England a happy woman after she had wrested the crown from her father's brow? Alas, no; the path of wrong-doing and usurpation never can bring contentment, even apart from the aggravation of filial ingratitude and treachery to one who, be his faults what they may, was boundless in his indulgence to his children. From her first accession to the throne her path had not been strewn with roses, though she is reported to have made a smart

* Vide Smollett's History.

repartee to her sister, who pitied her for the fatigue she suffered on the day of her coronation, replied :

“ A crown, sister, is not so heavy as it appears.”

The frenzied state of mind of the English people regarding religion proved Mary and William's sheet-anchor. But for the fanaticism and intolerance which then reigned supreme, the partisans of the sailor-king were so numerous and influential that Mary never could have gained her unrighteous ends.

Even as it was, throughout the whole of her short reign, her mind was always in a state of agitation on account of the numerous risings all over the country in favor of the hapless king she had dethroned.

There can be little doubt in the minds of those who look impartially on the events which took place at the epoch of which we write, that the unfortunate Stuart race were in advance of the times in which they lived. After all, blame him as you may, James the Second asked but for that toleration of the down-trodden Catholics of these kingdoms which has been granted them in more tolerant and enlightened times.*

The greatest offence, too, was taken at his admitting Catholics into the army, for it was a breach of the Test Act, by which, besides taking the oaths, they were obliged, under the penalty of forfeiting five hundred pounds, to receive the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England within six months of their admission into any employment, civil or military.

For this, his most just and equitable attempt to relieve his Catholic subjects, as also for the Declaration of Liberty of Conscience, which he commanded the bishops to read in the churches, he has been most severely blamed ; but the

*Rev. James Stanier Clarke's *Life of James the Second*.

latter had been published a whole year before, so that it was no new thing. There was time enough to consider the matter, and, since many of them had complied with his wish, he most unfortunately grew obstinate, and thought himself justified in punishing with imprisonment zealous and worthy men like Sancroft, Kerr, and others who did not.

And even with regard to this Declaration, what was it that was so outrageous in the attempt of the king? Neither more nor less, we reply, than the heinous crime of trying to place the long suffering, persecuted, trodden-down Catholic Church on a par with the Church of England. As we write these lines we have but one feeling, and that is of profound astonishment that men so good and upright and conscientious as those bishops undoubtedly were (their conduct later with regard to James, who had thrust them into the Tower, alone proves this) should have allowed their minds to be so swayed by the intolerance of the times as to have denied the liberty of conscience to their Catholic brethren which they so prized themselves.

The uncompromising Sancroft was a sore thorn in Mary's side. When she sent for his blessing he sent back word to her "to ask her father's blessing first, without which his would be useless." He refused to crown her and her husband, as also to allow them to be prayed for as sovereigns, and with some four or five others, forsook their livings rather than violate their consciences.

Alas, for Queen Mary, the crown, despite all her ambition and love of power, must have been a weary weight oftentimes, during the short six years God permitted her to wear it.

On the day of her coronation she received it laden with her father's malediction, and to retain it she and her sister Anne spread the vilest reports as to the spurious birth of the

Prince of Wales, then made religion, or rather the fanaticism of the times, the stepping-stone for their usurpation. She celebrated as a glorious victory the disastrous battle of the Boyne, and had the standards and other spoils taken from her father borne in triumphant procession, and then hung up in St. James' Chapel.

The irritation such actions as these produced amongst the adherents of her father may be better imagined than described.

Florence was now behind the scenes, and would have liked marvellously well to be enabled to transmit to the court at St. Germain's faithful accounts as to how matters went on in the royal household, but no earthly being was near in whom she could confide, and her uncle was too aged, and, in fact, becoming too much of an invalid, to trust with any dangerous correspondence.

Jealousies, too, long brooding between the queen and her sister, had at length burst out into a flame. It is somewhat amusing to note, in looking over the records of the past, how these two royal ladies conducted themselves after they had played into each other's hands as far as their father was concerned.

Behind the scenes ; yes, it is quite true, the truth cannot be concealed from dependents, whether our state be cast in the palace or the cottage, in public or in private life. I know not how it should be so, but that extremes oftentimes meet. Perhaps the difference in the disposition of her *protégé* to her own made Mary, in time, rather begin to like her than otherwise, as much as she could like any one beyond her husband. She must have known, too, that there was an aching void in the girl's heart, caused by herself and of her own making, and so endeavored to make some small atonement for the tyrannical restraint she put upon her, by a meagre show of sympathy and kindness.

Any way, Florence was more frequently with her than any of her other maids of honor, and, consequently, she was privy to many a sorrow that the outer world recked little of.

Submissive wife! how well your Dutch lord rewarded you is no new matter.

“That property—whose was it, indeed, but the private fortune of my father, inherited from the Earldoms of Ulster and Clare—I asked him to give it for the endowments of public schools; and, oh, how bitter, Elizabeth Villiers, my rival in his affections, is to have it all; it is *very, very* hard,” and as she spoke, a low, anguished sob from the queen burst forth, betraying the deep misery of her heart.

Unheard, unnoticed, Florence had entered the boudoir, an unwilling witness of Queen Mary’s grief. She coughed aloud in order to attract her attention. In her own mind she thought it no great loss that the Irish, so grievously afflicted during the reign of William, had lost the benefit of the schools Mary would have endowed to pervert them from their faith; but of the infamy of the use the king had put the property to there could be no doubt.

But the joy expressed in her countenance whenever William of Orange honored Kensington with his presence, was enough to show the happiness she felt; and when he scolded, which, morose as he was, was not unfrequently the case, she was too submissive a wife to repine, but bore with the greatest patience the caprices and outbreaks of his sarcastic and cynical temper.

Behold them settled in their new palace, only for a season; for, as usual, the king’s sojourns in England were short and interrupted. Florence held him in horror. Such coarseness as he was guilty of she had not been in the habit of witnessing. It was his inhospitality and vulgarity at the

dinner-table which had so disgusted her uncle; and once, with unmitigated disgust, she beheld him, when a small dish of peaches, the first of the season, were put on the table, draw the whole before him, and devour them without offering one to the queen. She was not surprised, however, because she had heard Lady Marlborough mention, as an incident of the same kind, that the Princess Anne, having dined with the king and queen, some green peas were placed before her, but the king, having a mind to them, ate them without offering any to her or the queen.

Early one morning, a very short time after the king had returned to Kensington, Florence, being from habit an early riser, was just finishing her toilette, when the old, awful sound she had heard the night of the fire at Whitehall again broke upon her ears, but mingled with the roar of flames and the crackling of wood rose the voice of the king shouting for his sword. "His sword," thought Florence, "is he bereft of his senses?" But, no; as with his wife, the case was the same with him. They had treacherously usurped the crown, and so they imagined treachery always busy about themselves. The king had mistaken the noise occasioned by the destructive element, and the outcries of his attendants, for an attack upon his palace. And amidst all the horror and alarm of an awful fire, the risible faculties of Florence were aroused to a degree of mirth she could with difficulty conceal, on meeting the king in one of the adjacent galleries hastening forward, as one demented, and calling loudly for his sword.*

"It is *fire*, your Majesty," said Florence; "see, your attendants are coming to apprize you of it. We had best hasten away, the rooms near the stone gallery are in flames."

*Tyndal's Continuation of Rapier.

She was correct. It was found to be accidental, and it was some time before the flames could be subdued. Treachery had nothing to do with these two calamities which pursued the king and queen, one quickly after the other. Nevertheless, that they should suspect treason lurked under all the untoward accidents of life, showed clearly that they knew they had just cause for apprehension.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COCK-PIT ; OR, THE HOME OF THE PRINCESS ANNE.



UCH was the name of the residence which Charles the Second bestowed upon his niece, when she became the bride of Prince George of Denmark.

This mansion was adjacent to the palace of Whitehall, and was built by Henry the Eighth, who was, doubtless, well fitted to enjoy the brutal sport signified by the name the palace bore.

In a boudoir, tastefully decorated, adorned with hangings of pale blue and amber satin, a lady is seated, with an open letter in her hand. Her face is round and pleasant-looking, rather than handsome ; she has rich chestnut hair, and a high color ; the eyelids are contracted, arising from inflammation in the eyes in her childhood, and those who do not know the cause of this contraction, which imparts a sort of frown to the expression of an otherwise pleasing countenance, might think it the effect of a sullen temper.

Standing, or rather reclining, against the chimney-piece, is a lady of bold and masculine demeanor. Her very appearance is that of a woman who will fight hard to carry

any point in view. She is exasperated just now, and she nervously beats the ground with her foot, and picks off the waxen leaves of a camelia in a vase just by.

The lady we first mentioned is Anne, Princess of Denmark. The imperious dame beside her is the notorious Sarah Churchill, afterwards Duchess of Marlborough.

“*Refused*, and refused in such a way!” said the princess, in a tone of indignation, again perusing her letter as she spoke.

“Yes,” was the reply, “and to dare refuse your request after all that my lord has done in Ireland. I really do not know how to contain myself, I feel so irritated, so enraged.”

“And yet the refusal of my request, contemptuously as it is worded, is not worse for you than what the prince and myself have had to suffer at the hands of Caliban. Could anything be worse than that Dutch monster’s leading him to believe that he might serve him as a volunteer at sea, and then when he has made his preparations, and sent all on board the ship he was to sail in, my sister forsooth refuses to let him go with the fleet? What do you think our feelings were when Rochester, whom we both love so dearly, was sent to explain the queen’s pleasure ‘that Prince George was to relinquish his intention of going to sea, and let it appear as if he did so of his own free will.’ Then when she found he would not submit to such a message, privately sent, there comes one in form to forbid his embarkation.”*

“Yes, madam, and it is a marvel to me how you can submit so patiently, and after giving up your place in the succession, too, to that Caliban, as you so justly call him, how you can meet the queen as if nothing had happened after such signal affronts, fills me with astonishment; but I,

*Dalrymple’s Appendix.

madam, am not so placable. The Order of the Garter is but a due reward to my husband's merit, and instead of taking that into consideration, the queen refuses, and couches her refusal in the most contemptuous terms."

"There is nothing to be done but to submit, my dear friend," said the princess. "I cannot help your disappointment. You well know what we ourselves are called on to undergo, and how my sister's anger has been excited by the pension of fifty thousand pounds having been granted to me. We cannot help ourselves while this Caliban lives."

"I pray you, madam, do not trouble on my account," replied Lady Marlborough. "I *do* know what you and the prince have to put up with, but a sunshiny day may yet come when we shall be rewarded for what we are at present made to undergo."

Lady Marlborough sat her down, and was buried in thought for a few moments. Vague ideas were floating through her mind as to whether they could not conspire with other disaffected ones, and so hurl the Dutch monarch and his consort from the possession of the regal power.

Meanwhile the unsuspecting Anne was thinking of Florence, and wondering why her sister should detain her at the court.

"What think you of Florence O'Neill?" she remarked. "Is it not strange the queen should keep her near her person. That young Jacobite's head has hatched plots already, she tells me, young as she is."

"Nay, madam, mayhap her majesty wishes to keep the young lady out of further mischief. She keeps a watchful eye, depend on it. A long head, too, that girl has got. She does not like Caliban, I am certain; she was so amused at certain anecdotes I told her about him, and yet was silent herself."

“But the queen found her at mischief once,” replied Anne. “My sister told me herself that but for that girl saving her life when the palace at Whitehall was on fire, she knew that about her that she scarce thinks confinement in the Tower would have atoned for. She may have learned a lesson of prudence since then, and have a wholesome fear of the queen’s wrath.”

“And what a life for the girl to lead, madam. She is only like a prisoner, you know—a sort of captive, nothing else. Think, too, what the St. Germain’s people must endure about her. Why, the late queen loved the girl as though she were her own child, and the queen knows it. Then, too, she is kept unmarried; I really pity her. But, do you know, madam, such strange thoughts were running through my head when you spoke to me of Florence O’Neill.”

“And, pray, what was the tenor of your thoughts?” asked the princess.

“If the king over the water were here, madam, then we should not suffer at the hands of Caliban.”

“Ah, no, the monster,” said Anne, laughing at the epithets which she and her favorite applied to the Dutch monarch when together, unconscious that they had a household spy in Lady Fitzharding, the sister of Elizabeth Villiers, through whom the king and queen always knew, in a very few hours, all that happened at the Cock-pit, and also every hard and abusive name that was applied to William.”*

“Would it be quite out of the question to apply to the king, madam; to the late king, I mean?”

Lady Marlborough was coming more directly to the point she had in view.

*Coxe’s Life of Marlborough.

The princess flushed very painfully; her favorite was touching on a delicate subject. Anne had disseminated the vilest slanders as to the birth of the Prince of Wales, and had done all that lay in her power to despoil her father of his crown; how shall she retrace the steps she has trod; how undo the mischief she has wrought: sincere repentance can alone atone for the latter, the injury is far beyond her power to repair.

The imperious favorite saw the agitation of her mistress and again returned to the topic.

“No more of this,” replied the princess, “I charge you let the subject drop.”

Lady Marlborough submitted for the present, but only to bring it forwards later, with what result the reader shall presently become acquainted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DUKE OF TYRCONNELL, AND SARSFIELD, LORD LUCAN.



It is a soft, summer night, serene and peaceful; all nature is hushed, the moon-beams play on the surface of the waters, and light up the flowery dells and glades around Limerick. Not a sound is heard for a few brief hours, when preparations will be made for the coming strife.

There was much suffering within the city. The foremost to relieve and succor, out of her own store, was the brave woman, Catherine O'Neill, who had in her own heart something of the spirit of her kinsman, Sarsfield.

* This worthy general, now Lord Lucan, for King James

* J. S. Clarke's Memoirs of James II.

had sent him the patent of an earldom, had, together with Lord Tyrconnell, put the town in a state of defence, and had induced the officers and soldiers to make oath that they would defend the rights of James to the last. But in spite of this oath, there were factious and desponding spirits whose whole thoughts were bent on a treaty with the Dutch King.

On the night in question, Tyrconnell and Sarsfield held a conference with a few of the chief officers, amongst whom were the notorious Colonel Luttrell, Sir Reginald, now Major St. John, and Major Sheldon Sarsfield, who was a man of commanding stature. The expression of his countenance was one of determination; he possessed all the qualities necessary for the onerous position he occupied.

Factionous spirits were, however, within the camp, and it required all his influence amongst those whom he commanded, to tame them into submission.

"What is to be done," exclaimed Colonel Luttrell, who was at the head of the desponders, "money has been ordered to be sent from France. But how are we to wait, reduced, as we are, to the greatest extremity. The discontent of the army will increase, and capitulate in spite of us, my lords," he added, addressing the General and the Lord Lieutenant.

This thought had likewise crossed the minds of them to whom he spoke, averse as they were to entertain such an idea.

"Do not let us dream of capitulation whilst we are still in a position to wield a sword," said Sir Reginald. "The men are becoming discouraged, it is true, on account of the extremities to which they are reduced, but they are still faithful. Nay, I believe one-third of William's army would come over to us, as Lord Tyrconnell said months since, could we but give them each a trifle of money and maintain them afterwards."

“But you see, Major St. John, we cannot support the troops we have, much less find money to obtain others,” said Luttrell, in a satirical tone of voice. “I have maintained all along, and do so still, finding the French King so slow in sending supplies, that I believe the end of it will be capitulation, though I see perfectly well that few are of my opinion.”

“Have patience yet twenty days,” said Tyrconnell. “We shall know by then if we act in accordance with the king’s wish in laying down our arms.”

His request was assented to, but the impatient and treacherous Luttrell entered into secret negotiations with the commanding officer of William’s troops, enquiring what conditions would be granted in case they submitted.

Sarsfield, ever full of zeal in the service of James, found out the treasonable correspondence that was being carried on.

A few mornings after this conference, he observed a young man, evidently a stranger, loitering about with a letter in his hand, and looking as if in search of some one.

“Whom do you want, friend?” said Sarsfield, observing that he was a stranger, and an Englishman.

“Colonel Luttrell, your honor. The letter is from General Ginckle’s quarters,” and the man touched his hat as he spoke.

“It is right, friend; tell your master it has fallen into safe hands,” exclaimed Sarsfield, taking the letter, and, in the greatest agitation, making his way to Tyrconnell.

Thus this letter, intended for Luttrell, fell into the hands of Sarsfield. It was read by the latter and Tyrconnell, and proved to be part of a secret and treasonable correspondence with the enemy. Luttrell was at once tried by a court-martial, and then put into prison.

It often happens that the body, enfeebled with age and

infirmity, yields or succumbs, whilst the mind remains in full vigor; thus it was with Tyrconnell. He and the brave General Sarsfield had had many points of difference, but were now on terms of agreement together. Little did either of them imagine on that night, when the conference was held, in the beginning of the second week of August, that on the feast of St. Lawrence, the gallant Tyrconnell would receive his death stroke.

Latterly his every thought had been given to the approaching contest, and how to make it a decisive one in favor of the late king, together with earnest endeavors to calm turbulent and factious spirits, to a certain degree, aided by Sarsfield who was deservedly beloved. He had succeeded, but the strain on the earl's mind had been too great for his failing strength and advancing years.

On the morning of the Feast of St. Lawrence he heard Mass. On his return home he fell back in his chair, seized with a fit of apoplexy; he recovered his senses and his speech, but only to languish for two days, when he expired in the midst of the calamities he had been striving to overcome.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BESIEGED CITY.



IMMEDIATELY after his death, the troops of the Dutch King proceeded to within five miles of the city. The negotiations with Luttrell made them deem it unnecessary to bring their cannon, but the French officer entrusted with the command by Sarsfield, ordering troops into the town on the Clare side, Ginckle prepared for a formal siege, and waited for his artillery.

Five days of suspense for the inhabitants of the besieged city, and then the troops of the usurper William put themselves before the place.

Days of sorrow for Limerick, though ended by a treaty alike advantageous and honorable, had its terms been kept by the English.

Alas, for the horrors and calamities of war, when famine and carnage walk hand-in-hand through the land, laying desolate and ravaging its fairest spots—when rapine and sacrilege, and wholesale murder are perpetrated, and made just in the eyes of those who commit them, because it is the time of war.

There was a brave woman in Limerick, whose youth, and strength, and health had all passed away, for even middle age was on the wane. In the midst of the horrors, when terror-stricken women pressed their little ones to their bosoms, and the young and the tender wailed for bread, she was in the midst of them. Bombarding had commenced; shells were falling thick and fast; churches and houses became a wreck to the fury of the assailants, and many a till then flourishing homestead, was laid in

ruins. In one of these doomed houses was Catherine O'Neill, speaking words of comfort to a knot of helpless women and still more helpless babes. Thick and fast came the dropping shells, and in this house the cousin of Sarsfield met her death with some half-dozen of her female friends, and their helpless children clustered around her.*

At last a breach is made where stands the old Abbey of St. Dominick, and even then the garrison, better prepared than they supposed the army of William, were on the point of abandoning the undertaking, when, by the scandalous neglect, to give it no harsher name, of Clifford, one of James' English officers, William's troops were allowed to make a bridge of boats, and thus to pass their horses and dragoons across the Shannon, and so cut between the Irish horse commanded by Sheldon and St. John, and the town itself.

Sarsfield bit his lips in almost uncontrollable anger, for having foreseen this danger, he had given Clifford fifteen hundred dragoons to oppose any such attempt, he having the camp within two miles of him, and the town within three.

"Ruined, undone by folly and treachery combined," exclaimed Sarsfield, when this wretched tidings was brought to him. "Instead of giving opposition, or even noticing what was being done, has he positively suffered our enemy to make a bridge under his very eyes."

Sheldon and St. John were alike dismayed ; the first they knew of the attempt was that William's troops had actually passed, and that Clifford was retreating towards them.

Furious at this scandalous neglect, and foreseeing the consequences which were certain to result from it, all they

* Clarke's Memoirs of James II.

could do was to stop the besieging army at a pass, till they could gain the mountains with their horse dragoons, and so make way to Six Mile Bridge.

Literally fighting their way through the troops of the usurper, the little party of men under St. John and Sheldon at last accomplished their object, but not being able to remain, were ordered back toward Clare. And now the great body of horse and dragoons have passed over their bridge of boats, and present themselves before Thomond Gate.

Leading, as it were, a forlorn hope, one brave officer, Colonel Lacy, with a small body of 700 men, disputed their approach bravely. Like lions, did he and his little party fight, but the odds are against them, the valiant Lacy is overpowered, not by bravery or courage, but by the mere force of superior numbers, and a constant supply of fresh men on the part of his assailants. Again he and his little band of stout Milesian hearts rally, and repossess themselves of the ground from which they had been driven, but the odds are still against them, and unable to resist they make towards the gate.

Alas, alas, for that brave little band that day cut to pieces at Thomond Gate, the craven-hearted mayor of the town, fearing the English would enter, dared to shut it against his own people, and the greater part of that devoted little party were butchered in cold blood.

Despair seized upon the general officers, the enemy was between them and the horse, which would perish for want of provender. How could they hold out without horse or dragoons, or if they raise the siege, where are their means of feeding the fort?

“Propose a treaty,” said Monsieur de Usson and other French officers, but the Irish officers are mindful of their

oath. Until the bishop and divines of Limerick remind them, that blocked up as they were on every side, and thus unable to hear from the king should his answer even come, it was impossible for them to keep to the letter of their oath.

Sarsfield beheld the forts taken and their condition desperate, yet he had the courage to insist on, and the dexterity to obtain articles not only for the security of the people of Limerick, but also for the whole of Ireland. Consulting the honor and advantage of his royal master James, in getting leave for his men to go, and even ships to transport them into France, should they still desire to follow his fortunes and adhere to his service, which with those who had gone previously, clinging to the fortunes of the ex-king brought, from first to last nearly 30,000 men into the kingdom of France, 12,000 men chose *at once* rather to undergo exile from their native land than submit to the government of the Dutch usurper. Nowhere, indeed, had the ill-fated James more staunch supporters than his Irish subjects.

But vainly can we attempt to describe the embittered feelings of the Earl of Lucan and his faithful followers, when, a very few days later, the dawn of the early morning showed them a French fleet on the coast, comprising eighteen ships of the line, with 30,000 arms, and also stores of provisions and ammunition.

Assistance so near, and yet they had been compelled to yield. The feeling in the mind of Lucan and the more intrepid and earnest of his followers was, that but for impatient and factious men like Luttrell, the kindly aid of the magnificent Louis would not have proved ineffectual.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MINIATURE.



HASTLY sights met the eyes of Lord Lucan after the capitulation. The remains of his heroic cousin, lying amongst the dead, filled his heart with poignant grief; and he stood some time, lost in his melancholy thoughts, beside her remains and those of the little ones who had fallen by her side, when the voice of his faithful servant Dennis aroused him.

The poor honest-hearted fellow could scarcely speak for emotion. At last, after two or three inarticulate efforts, he managed to say :

“Arrah, thin, Ginerall dear, the murtherous Saxons have done black work, bad cess to them for that same; but I come to tell ye there’s one English officer, Major St. John, just afther dying, as I may say, and he begs to see ye, Ginerall; he is mortal bad, and has had two ugly wounds. He keeps saying, ‘Fetch me the Ginerall,’ and I tell you his spirit can’t go in peace till he sees you.”

“Come with me, Dennis, and show me where he is; I will go to him at once.”

Dennis led the way to the hospital, in which extra beds were being hastily improvised. All around lay the wounded and the dying, their white faces looking ghastly, as though already the life had departed.

On a low settle bed lay Sir Reginald, grievously wounded in the right arm and left shoulder. He was rambling incoherently when Sarsfield approached his couch. A surgeon, assisted by a Sister of Charity, was binding up his wounds.

He was talking of his early English home, of the happy scenes of childhood, forever gone—

“Yet who for power would not mourn,
That he no more must know;
His fair red castle on the hill,
And the pleasant lands below.”

These beautiful lines, of one of our English bards, might well answer for such as Sir Reginald St. John.

But as Lord Lucan listens he discovers that the incoherent wanderings of St. John are not the mere ramblings of delusion, for words like these fell from his lips:

“Yes, it was all my fault; *I* took Benson to the Grange, *I* induced her uncle to go to London. But for *my* sin and folly in that matter, my Florence, my betrothed one, would never have been seen at the hateful Mary's court.”

“Aye, a light breaks upon me, then,” thought Lord Lucan; “you have done mischief. Major, now I can account for that which has perplexed me—the reason of your sad, dejected countenance and constant fits of abstraction. It was through *you*, then, my kinswoman, Florence, has got about that thrice accursed court.”

The good General, however, kept down all expression of what he really felt, and bending his ear low so as to catch the words which fell in broken sentences, and taking the cold hand of St. John within his own, he lent an attentive ear to what he thought the last injunctions of a dying friend.

“Will you give my Florence this—and this?” he murmured, giving Sarsfield a small miniature of himself, set with diamonds, together with an unsealed letter.

“On my faith as a soldier and a gentleman, I promise to do as you request,” replied Sarsfield, much moved.

“That letter I wrote lest I should fall in battle,” he resumed. “It begs her to forgive the folly which my

loyalty to William led me to commit ; for, but for me, she had never been at the court of Mary. It begs her to think with tenderness of my memory, when she looks upon that likeness, if I die ; and if I live, it releases her from the engagement she has made to one whom the Prince of Orange has made an outlaw and a beggar. Tell me, once more, my lord, will you undertake to—to promise, that in some way my Florence shall—shall surely have these tokens of—of our betrothal, and—and—”

But St. John had lost all power to proceed. The cold fingers which had tightly grasped Sarsfield's hand relaxed their hold, a pallor like that of death overspread his face, and his head fell heavily on the pillow.

“Is there any hope, think you?” said Lord Lucan, addressing the surgeon.

“Very little, my lord ; the gentleman has been badly wounded. I would be sorry to give an opinion at present, but it is a *very* bad case ; it is more than probable it will prove a fatal one.”

Lord Lucan carefully placed the letter and miniature in his breast pocket, resolving to carry them with him to France, as amongst the ladies at the exiled court there might probably be one who could undertake, through her friends, to transmit the packet safely to Florence. He then visited the beds of other officers, as well as of the men who had received severe wounds at the hands of the enemy, and ended the painful duties of a very melancholy day, assembling those under his command, exhorting them to peaceable and quiet living, and inquiring into the number of the men who intended to become exiles rather than submit to the usurper's yoke.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SHADOW OF THE GRAVE.



It is a lovely evening in Autumn, that season of the year in which the bright green foliage of Summer gives place to those varied tints which constitute the chief charm of woodland scenery.

The queen and her court are at Kensington, the king's favorite palace, he being daily expected in England; and as the baronet's health had not improved sufficiently to allow of his return to Morville, the proximity of his house to the palace gave Florence the opportunity of frequently visiting him.

On one of these visits he surprised her by handing to her a small packet. It had reached the baronet's hands through a private channel, and from their renowned kinsman, Sarsfield, Lord Lucan.

Florence grew red and white by turns, as, with cold and trembling fingers, she untied the silken ribbon that fastened the packet.

The first letter she opened was from Lord Lucan. It ran as follows:

MY DEAR FLORENCE:

In compliance with the request of a brave officer, who has been fighting under my command, I transmit to you the enclosed. I also beg, at the same time, to acquaint you with the death of your aunt, the amiable and beloved Catherine O'Neill. She was killed by a shell falling on her house whilst the town was bombarded, at a moment in which she was actively engaged in comforting and helping those who had flocked around her.

I am glad to tell you that the writer of the enclosed letter, written by him several weeks since, is pronounced out of danger. As soon as he recovers sufficiently to travel, he will accompany me to St. Germain.

I must not forget to add that all cousin Catherine's wealth is bequeathed to yourself.

I hope, my dear Florence, that the day is not far distant when I shall have the pleasure of assisting at your nuptials with one who was the best and bravest of my late officers.

I remain, dear Florence,

Your affectionate Cousin,

LUCAN.

Well did Florence remember that good aunt of her's, and tears fell to that memory long before she had reached the end of her letter.

Then Florence unfolded a sheet of paper containing a few hastily written lines, of the purport of which the reader is already aware. Within them was wrapped the miniature, a welcome *souvenir* indeed.

She sat still a long while pondering over the contents of that last letter, and angry with herself, after all, that any thought should distract her from sorrow at the sudden and violent death of her aunt.

Of course Sir Reginald had been long since forgiven; had he not perilled his life in fighting for the cause of King James? She had riches enough for both, notwithstanding his confiscated estates; but the trouble now would be to escape from her present thralldom. She had no hope of being able to do so even had she been this moment free. Could she leave that aged man, whose days were fast drawing to a close, and who was clinging to her as a father to a beloved child.

"I will leave them with you, uncle dear," she said, kneeling by his bedside, and placing the letters and miniature in his hand; "you will take care of them for me. It is hard to part with them, but I dare not have them at the palace under my care. Is it not hard to bear this restraint? What right has the queen to keep me there against my will?"

"No right, my child, but by her power. Moreover, I fancy she is as much attached to you as she can be to any one."

"The queen cares for no one but her husband, uncle. But, hark, there is the sound of carriage wheels; it tells me my time is up. Farewell, my own dear uncle, till to-morrow. I shall come and see you every day whilst I am in Kensington."

On her return she was summoned to attend the queen. After a few common-place remarks respecting the health of her uncle, the queen said:

"Do you remember Count Von Arnheim, a very handsome young officer, high in favor of the king? He holds a very honorable post at the Hague, and accompanied the king to England on his last visit hither."

"Yes, madam, I do remember such a person slightly."

"The king has formed intentions respecting him which we mutually hope will not be displeasing to our *protégée*, Florence O'Neill. The Count has a fine estate near the Hague, and as he is a favorite of the king's, I need not tell you that his interests will be cared for."

Florence sat like a statue, pale and speechless, whilst the queen delivered this tirade. When the queen paused,

"Madam," she said, "I beg the king and yourself to accept my grateful thanks for your kind intentions, but I cannot marry Count Von Arnheim."

"Not marry him, and why? He is handsome, amiable, and wealthy. Surely you are not encouraging any further attachment to the traitor St. John?"

"Spare me, gracious madam," said the girl, rising, and then leaning against a chair for support; "I have no intention to marry; it is impossible for me to wed the Count."

“The king will be displeased that you should reject an alliance which we have thought well of. Still more, should he deem that you persist in your rejection of the Count because you encourage still an attachment for the outlaw St. John. With no friends in England but your uncle, who will not tarry long, it is something worse than foolish to refuse overtures which the king and myself consider it will be for your advantage to accept.”

“It is simply impossible, your Majesty, that I can ever marry Count Von Arnheim.”

“I see well how it is,” replied the queen; “also, that I have pressed the matter too much. The Count is coming here along with the king in a few weeks; you will overcome this reluctance.”

“Madam, spare me any overtures on the part of the Count,” said Florence; “my mind will remain unaltered; I shall never marry him.”

“I see that you are obstinate,” was the reply. “Time effects great changes. Before very long you may be as anxious to complete this match as you are now violently opposed. Obstinacy is the prevailing characteristic of the dispositions of certain members of my own family. It is that of my own sister, and her positiveness in retaining those mischievous favorites of hers, the Marlboroughs, are a proof of it. She will have to yield, and so will you.”

Florence stood as one bewildered, as, uttering these words, the queen—her majestic, portly figure erect as a dart, and her countenance expressive of anger—left the room.

“Was ever any one in this world more tormented,” sighed she as, entering her own apartment, she sat down, and thought over the events of the last few hours “With no friend or relative in London but the dear old man, who

will not, I fear, linger long, as the queen coldly reminded me, and unable to get over to France, what step can I take to guard myself against this new tyranny ? ”

Then she sat still for a time, but her tears fell fast. She might seem to be looking out, as she sat at the open window, on the prospect in the distance, for the last rays of the sun were setting, and the tops of the tall trees and the stately mansions in the distance were lighted up by its golden beams, the clouds tipped with the brightest hues of the ruby and amethyst.

“ I am rich, and what does my wealth do for me,” sighed the girl. “ Better be the daughter of a poor cottager on my uncle’s estate, or of some humble peasant woman in *la belle France*, than suffer as I do. What is the use of wealth, I wonder,” she rambled on, “ when one cannot do as one pleases? I would do much good if I could but be left alone, and try to put to good account what God has given me, yes I am sure, I am sure I would. Riches I would make a passport to heaven, unless my nature changes; but, will they ever make me happy, I wonder, this wealth that people covet so; I shall have in abundance, but deprived of my liberty, I am worse off than the poorest woman in England.”

She was silent for a little while, then suddenly a perplexing thought filled her; she rose and walked about the room, then sat her down and rambled on again.

“ Well, if this be the case, then, indeed, I am undone,” she said. “ I heard the Lady Marlborough say, that the queen was so angry that the Princess Anne got the pension from the government, because she wanted the money to help the king with his continental wars. Von Arnheim is one of his foreign subjects and a favorite; is it possible, that from interested motives they are trying to force me into a

marriage with this man. If so, the deaths of the only two relations from whom my wealth is derived, at this particular juncture, is favorable to any scheme they may have formed. Shall they have their way then, shall the queen force me into compliance? No, not while Reginald lives, or even if I am to have the pang of hearing of his death, she shall shut me up in the gloomy old Tower first."

The more Florence suffered her mind to dwell on this new idea, the more convinced she became that an ulterior motive was at the bottom of the marriage they were evidently about to coerce her into making, and the more terrified she became, at the near prospect there evidently was of her uncle's death. The queen, early in the first year of her regal power, dismissed all Catholics from the vicinity of the metropolis, and Florence was at no loss to guess why her invalid uncle was suffered to dwell at Kensington, or she herself in the palace, and could no longer shut her eyes to the fact that she would ere long be subjected to some cruel tyranny, unless some fortuitous chance occurred in her favor.

Warned at last by a sudden chillness seizing her whole frame, she closed the open window near which she had been seated.

The moon had sunk beneath a cloud, and the sky now looked wild and stormy, a wind had arisen, and a few rain drops, pattering against the window, betokened an approaching storm.

"Dark as is my own fate, oh, my God support me," sighed the girl, whilst her eyes filled with bitter tears; but even as she turned away, one bright star shone out in the canopy of heaven, whilst all around was black and gloomy. Call it imagination, call it enthusiasm or what you will, that bright star appeared to her as a presage that all would

yet be well, an answer to the aspiration she had uttered, the almost wild cry which, in the agony of her heart, she had sent up to heaven for help. Turning from the casement, she fell upon her knees, and with uplifted hands prayed long and earnestly for guidance and assistance, and then soothed and comforted, and sustained by the providence of the God in whom she placed an unwavering trust, she slept in the midst of the dangers that beset her path, the calm, peaceful sleep of an infant cradled by the protecting arm of its mother.

On the morrow when she sought the queen, she observed that her manner was cold and restrained to herself, but more than usually free and pleasant with the other ladies, and it was a relief to Florence when business on matters of State summoned the queen to her cabinet, and left her free to visit her uncle.

The baronet was propped up by pillows, and she observed, with a shudder, that a change had taken place since she was with him the previous evening. She had never stood face to face with death, had never before been present when the spirit was passing away from its earthly tenement, consequently, she was not aware that the grey shadow which seemed to rest upon his countenance, was the shadow that betokens speedy dissolution; had she been conscious of this she would not have distracted his mind with the narration of the tyranny of the queen on the previous evening.

She had dismissed the nurse immediately on her entrance, and seated herself by his bedside, her hand resting in his.

"Does he not feel for my wretchedness?" thought she, when she had concluded. "He seems as if he did not heed what I have said."

She was mistaken, however, but the sands of life were running quickly out, though at last he gathered strength to speak.

“My child, be firm and courageous, whatever you suffer ; I charge you with my dying breath, do not marry the king’s favorite, be true to yourself, as I was *not* when I came to London. Remember my words, the day will come, sooner or later, in which, impossible as it now appears, you will return to France. Now draw up the blinds and let the glorious sunlight fall upon my room, the next rising of which mine eyes will not behold, and then give ear to what I am about to say.”

A spasm shot across her heart, as drawing aside the heavy curtains of crimson satin, she suffered the soft beams of the October sun to enter the room, and, at the same time, beheld more vividly the dusky shadow over the face of the dying man, more painfully vivid by the clear light of day, than when she had first entered the darkened room.

“Dearest uncle, my beloved and only friend,” said she, “do you really believe that you are dying?”

“I know it, my child, now do not take on so ; now listen to me, I am about to ask a question. Know you that Father Lawson is in London?”

Florence shook her head, her emotion was too great to allow her to speak.

“Well then, he is stopping at a house in Soho, the direction of which I can give you. The servants can be trusted, they are all from Morville, and without one exception, are good Catholics ; the nurse must be got out of the way, she being a Protestant. In the dead hour of the night, my child, Father Lawson must come hither and sustain a dying man with the life-giving Sacraments he so sorely needs.”

“I will write to the queen,” said Florence, “and shall ask leave to be absent some days from the Palace. I will take the nurse’s place at night, and send her to bed.”

“Ring the bell then, and tell the servant who answers it to send the house steward to me immediately.”

Florence delivered her uncle's message and a few moments later, Onslow, a white-headed man, who had grown up from early youth in the baronet's service, as dependents were wont to do in old times, made his appearance.

The poor fellow was much moved when he approached the baronet. The simple, unaffected manner of the old gentleman, who was one of the best type of the school of country squires, had attached his servants and his tenantry strongly to his person. He had been a good master, an indulgent landlord, and a faithful friend.

"My dear Sir Charles," said Onslow, but he could say no more, grief choked his utterance.

"Onslow, my good fellow, give me your hand," said the dying baronet; "you are witness for me that I have never been a hard master, nor a grasping landlord; that I have ever made it a rule to allow every man as much or more than his due; that I have lead a moral life, bringing shame and trouble to no man's household; that I have opened my purse and fed those that were hungry; that no poor person was ever suffered to pass the gates of Morville Grange unrelieved; that I have been called a good man, and held by my neighbors in respect, as one who lived in good accord and fellowship with others; and yet, Onslow, now that I come to die, I see sins where of old I saw not anything; now, I see cause for repentance in many things, which in past days seemed of no account."

"My dear, dear master, would that when I myself die, my conscience may reproach me with nothing more of weightier import than that which is on yours," said Onslow.

"Sufficient for every man is his own burden, and mine seemeth very heavy now; so Onslow, I warn you by our common faith, hasten to Soho, in Bolton Street, at the sign of the Blue Boar. You will find, on asking for him, and pre-

senting this ring, one Mr. Allen ; wait, if he be not within ; when you see him you will recognize mine own saintly chaplain, Father Lawson, forced by the perils of these dangerous times, to abide in places scarce seemly for a priest of our holy Church to dwell in. When you give him the ring it will be a sign to him that my hour has come : tell him not to fail to be here as soon as the shades of night have fallen, for that his old friend may see the setting of the sun, but will never look on its rising."

Onslow, much moved, took the ring and hastened to execute his errand, and a short time after, the physician, calling to see his patient, the fears of Florence and the conviction of Sir Charles that he was near his end, were confirmed by him.

The only difficulty was in the disposal of the nurse in such a way as not to give rise to suspicion ; it was managed by Florence herself. Her eyes, swollen by her tears, testified to her affection, and sending for the woman she said to her,

"I am going to take upon myself a portion of the task of nursing my uncle, therefore, during the early portion of the night alone, should your services be required, should you be wanted I shall have you called."

The woman, who had for several nights been deprived of her rest, was nothing loth to hear that she could have her place supplied, and thus procure comfortable sleep ; and as Florence took care to arrange that the room provided for her use should be quite at the other side of the house, there was no fear of molestation or intrusion from her.

In the early part of the night, then, Florence, in compliance with the wishes of her dying uncle, took a few hours' rest. At midnight she was again seated by his side, the woman having been conducted to the room destined for

her use. The door communicating with her uncle's suite of apartments she ordered to be carefully locked, lest curiosity or any other cause should lead the nurse to leave her room in the night and wander to any other part of the house.

Between the hours of twelve and one, disguised as a farmer, Father Lawson was ushered into the sick chamber. The metamorphosis was complete, as far as outward appearances went. He looked like some one of the stout, honest, and somewhat rough mannered men whose character he had assumed for the time being.

After the confession of the baronet had been heard, the servants were summoned (none but the Protestant nurse went to bed that night), and the little party, kneeling around the bed, joined in prayer whilst the last rites of the Church were administered and the Bread of Life broken to the dying man.

The ceremonies were over, but still Father Lawson lingered, wishful to see the last of the friend to whom he had for many years been chaplain, in the quiet solitude of Morville.

The end drew very near; the dull, glazed eye, the heavy death dews, the restlessness, all betokened approaching dissolution.

Present to him now are the times forever past; he rambles, and his speech is thick and incoherent; secular amusement and religious persecution are all mixed up together.

“A fine morning for the hunt, gentlemen. Sir Thomas, I shall come and see your pack. Hallo—to horse—bring out the hounds—rare sport shall we have to day—”

There was a pause. The eyes of the dying man are closed, the breath suspended; will he speak again?

“Hark! hark how the knaves beat against the door.

Never mind, let them in; Morville boasts a secret hiding-place and outlet for her priests which none have yet discovered."

Florence trembled and turned pale as these words fell upon her ear. There was no "priest's hiding-hole" at Kensington should the visit of Father Lawson be known to any but themselves.

Other thoughts, and holier ones, now fill the mind of the dying man. "Florence, my child," he says, "God protect and bless you. Nay, do not take on so much, my loving niece, because the old man's life is near the end. Rather be glad the aids of religion have sustained him, aids which many cannot have in times like these. Father Lawson, accept my thanks for having at your peril visited me this night," and he slightly raised his hand so that the priest might clasp it in his own.

Then his voice grew more and more faint, but he begged that his servants might each press his hand, and asked their forgiveness if he had ever done them wrong.

He never spoke again, but remained perfectly quiet. His lips occasionally moving, showed he was joining in prayer with the priest.

He had been quite right in his assertion the previous day—he was not to see the rising of another sun.

The grey of the early morning had, however, dawned before all was over. In pity to him, Florence strove to suppress the hysterical sobs which ever and again broke forth in spite of herself. She at last succeeded, and the deep voice of Father Lawson, reciting the prayers for a soul in its agony, alone interrupted the silence of the death chamber.

A deep sigh at length broke the stillness, the cold fingers which had been entwined in those of the niece he so dearly loved relaxed their hold. They looked upon the features

of the dead, the spirit of Sir Charles had fled from its mortal tenement.

These were the times of persecution, when a price was set upon the priest who durst venture to labor in England for the salvation of souls.

Florence hung for a few moments in speechless grief over the corpse; then, mindful of the duties of hospitality, and of the peril of Father Lawson, she turned from the dead to the living, not forgetting either the necessity of at once dispersing the servants, and arousing the nurse, who was to be led to believe that the baronet had died suddenly, to account for not requiring her assistance.

Save a glass of hot spiced wine and a piece of dry bread, Father Lawson partook of no refreshment. He had rendered the services of his priestly ministration, and was now anxious to be gone.

“My poor Florence,” he said, at parting, “I grieve to think of the dangers that beset you at the court, but bear up awhile; I have powerful friends amongst the Jacobite nobility, and though you may not be aware of it, persons will be around you who take an interest in your welfare, and who are also connected with the exiled court. But see, the morning has fairly dawned, it bids me leave you. Will you not return to the palace at once?”

“Not till after the interment, *certainly not*,” and Florence laid a stress on those last two words; “he was so good to me. The last two relations have been snatched from me so suddenly I can scarce as yet realize my position. I shall be firm in my refusal to contract an alliance in marriage at the court, live only in hopes of returning to St. Germain, and when, a short time hence, I am able to claim the inheritance bequeathed to me, the persecuted of our Church shall have all the help it is in my power to bestow.”

“May God bless your good intentions, my child, and, guiding you safely through your troubled life at Mary’s court, make you ever worthy of the position in which He has placed you. Farewell, may we one day meet under less trying circumstances.”

Thus, in the still silence of the morning, the disguised and persecuted priest went his way to his obscure lodgings. Alas, for the spirit of the times, that in secrecy and silence the zealous priest was able to preserve the faith, which but for men like Father Lawson must absolutely have died out during the period when the horrible penal laws were in full force.

Florence, now a ward of the crown, was not allowed to nurse her grief in the presence of Death. The queen summoned her to the palace, ordered her mourning, treated her with all imaginable kindness, and deputed one of the officers of the royal household to give the necessary instructions for the removal of the body for interment in the family vault of the De Greys at Morville.

This arrangement Florence rebelled against in her heart, but herein the queen was perfectly right in removing her from a scene calculated only to nurse the depression of spirits to which she was gradually yielding.

Once again was she permitted to revisit the house, and gaze again on the features, serene and peaceful in the slumber of the grave. The body of the deceased baronet was removed by night to the hearse which was to convey it to Morville, whither it was to be followed to the grave by his devoted tenantry, dependents, and friends, but no blood relation. The young heiress, Florence, being his only surviving relative, was at the head of that long troop of mourners.

The Grange was then left in the care of two persons, one

of whom, at the express wish of Florence, was Robert Onslow.

Some three or four weeks after the death of Sir Charles the queen had decreed that Florence should look over the papers and personal matters belonging to the baronet, and the house and furniture—the terms of its occupation would then have expired—was to be delivered up to its owner.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LETTERS FOR ST. GERMAINS.



NO suspense or anxiety can well exceed that of watching for the post, above all, when we are on the look-out for, perhaps, important intelligence. If this is the case in the nineteenth century, when postal arrangements are conducted with such facility, what must the tortures of suspense have been such as those suffered who were situated as were the exiles at St. Germain's.

Weary with vainly watching for news, Mary Beatrice began gradually to awaken to the painful idea that she had forever lost her favorite. It was one trial more to add to the many already suffered, and a very great one she held it to be.

A year has passed away, another and the last effort of any consequence had been made in behalf of James by the battle of La Hague, but the very winds of Heaven were against the hapless king. He had waited a month for favorable winds to cross over to England, and meanwhile the Dutch fleet, joining with that of Admiral Russell in the Downs, appeared on the coast of France. A Jacobite at heart, and a favorite of his old master, fain would Russell

have avoided a collision, and if Tourville, the commander of the French fleet, would consent to pass quietly by with his squadron at night he should not be attacked.

The bravery of Tourville, however, was too unreasonable to allow of his putting his own glory in the shade for the sake of James, and the encounter that ended in the loss of the French fleet sent James back in grief and sorrow to St. Germain's, and filled with despair and mortification his adherents in England.

Down-spirited, the poor king had lingered three sad weeks in Normandy ere he could make up his mind to return to St. Germain's, whither he had at last returned, won over by his sorrowing and anxious queen.

At fitful and uncertain intervals only came news from England. In the previous year they had been prostrated with grief by the news of Ashton's execution. Then when, after the famous Treaty of Limerick had been signed, and Lord Lucan came over to St. Germain's, bringing with him Sir Reginald and a troop of devoted followers, a multitude of letters at the same time reached the hands of the king and queen. On a fine Summer morning, about the end of July, in the year 1693, after several weeks' weary watching, came news from London.

The windows of the king's favorite closet were formed in a large bay, and jutting boldly forward, they presented a fine view of the valley beneath, as also of the surrounding country. It was in this room that the queen had held an interview with the unfortunate John Ashton at the beginning of our tale.

Down in the valley he recognizes, making his way to the chateau, an old sea commander of his own, a man of large proportions, stout, and tall, his features hard and weather-

beaten, and his hair, whitened by the hand of time, blowing about in the summer breeze.

“Why, surely, yonder is my brave old friend and mate, Davy Lloyd,” said the king, watching the man beneath ascend with some difficulty the ascent leading to the chateau. “Had I known he was at St. Germain, a carriage should have been sent for him. Time begins to leave its traces on him now; how old he looks.”

How prone we are to notice its trace on others, and forget ourselves. James looked old and care-worn beyond what he imagined. Time and trouble had plowed deep furrows in his face.

Heartily the king welcomed his old sea commander, and not long had he been seated before he informed the king, with a significant glance, that he had letters from England, which he had promised to deliver with his own hands.

“I met and recognized the Earl of Lucan and Sir Reginald St. John, of your Majesty’s Guards. ’Sdeath, how the young rascal’s eyes sparkled when I gave him a letter from his lady-love, the fair Mistress O’Neill. She also sent one for Lord Lucan; and I must crave your Majesty’s pardon for giving to any one before yourself,” said Lloyd to the queen, “but I thought I might not meet with them again, as my time here will be but short. Here, madam, is the letter,” and the old sailor presented it to the queen, whose eyes sparkled with delight, for she recognized the handwriting of her favorite Florence; “and here, sire, are two of the greatest consequence, and you see they are presented last, which ought to have been the first. Do you know the handwriting, sire?”

Poor fond father! A flush of pleasure lighted up his face as the king recognized the handwriting on one of the letters. He remembered the other also, but laid it aside till he had perused the first. It ran as follows:

December, 1691.

I have been very desirous of some safe opportunity to make you a sincere and humble offer of my duty and submission, and for you to be assured that I am both truly concerned for the misfortune of your condition, and sensible, as I ought to be, of my own unhappiness. As to what you may think I have contributed to it, if wishes could recall what is past, I had long since redeemed my fault. I am sensible it would have been a great relief to me if I could have found means to have acquainted you earlier with my repentant thoughts, but I hope they may find the advantage of coming late—of being less suspected of insincerity than, perhaps, they would have been at any time before.

It will be a great addition to the ease I propose to my own mind by this plain confession, if I am so happy as to find that it brings any real satisfaction to yours, and that you are as indulgent and as easy to receive my humble submission as I am to make it, in a free, disinterested acknowledgment of my fault, for no other end but to deserve and receive your pardon. I have had a great mind to beg you to make *one compliment for me*: but fearing the expressions which would be most proper for me to make use of might be, perhaps, the least convenient for a letter, I must content myself at present with hoping the bearer will make a *compliment* for me to the queen.

The king laid it aside, and took up Marlborough's letter. The queen meanwhile had vanished, and was busily employed with the perusal of her old favorite's epistle in her own cabinet. Lord Marlborough wrote, averring that he could neither eat nor sleep for his remembrance of the crimes he had committed against his king. "I make your Majesty," he added, "offers of unlimited service, and I assure you I will bring back the Princess Anne to her duty if I receive the least word of encouragement."

"I shall write to Marlborough," said the king, laying his letter aside, "that his good intentions must be proved by deeds rather than words."

At that moment there was a knock at the closet door, and

a page introduced Lord Lucan, whose prodigious size far exceeded that of the stalwart Welchman, Davy Lloyd.

"I have had a letter that has given me pleasure, Lucan," he said, showing him the epistle of the princess, as Lloyd was leaving the room, the fond, weak heart of the king yearning towards his younger child. "My daughter Anne, Lucan, is surely better than her sister Mary."*

Captain Lloyd's hand was yet on the handle of the door, when this remark attracted his attention. He paused, half opened it again, thrusting forward his white head, saying:

"I beg your Majesty to understand they are both alike in principle; the one is not a whit better than the other; a couple of ——," and here the rough seaman used a canine comparison, to which an oath was added, which we may not repeat in these pages.

Poor, foolish, fond James! A deep sigh escaped him as Captain Lloyd closed the door. His words had been harsh and coarse, but the king knew him to be warmly devoted to his interests, and felt that he must be well convinced that Anne was only seeking to further her own selfish views, or that he would never have burst out with such uncontrollable indignation.

"Well, Lucan, and what news has the captain brought for *you*," said the king, as he threw the letter of the princess aside.

"Merely a letter from Florence, your Majesty. Poor child, she seems to entertain no hope of getting away from Mary's Court. She has also sent a letter to St. John, releasing him, I believe, from the contract that existed between them; behold him, Sire, he is walking on the terrace beneath the window. He looks very lachrymose, docs

*Macpherson State Papers.

he not, rather unlike the fine, dashing, young fellow, who last year offered me his services at Limerick. Active service will rout him out of his trouble most speedily, your Majesty."

"He will not be suffered to remain long inactive," replied the king, "but I grieve for Florence very much, there is little doubt, Sarsfield, but that the rich estates of your young kinswoman are coveted by William. His conquests in Flanders are costing him dear; he is impoverishing England to carry on his wars, and the larger the number of the estates confiscated on the plea of rebellion, the better for him. My poor Lucan, how severely have you and many others suffered by your devotion to our cause."

A tear stood in the king's eye as he spoke. The brave, warm-hearted Irishman beheld it; his heart was as soft as that of a woman, and muttering a few words about only having done his duty in sacrificing his estates, and urging his countrymen to go to France, he turned to the window to conceal his emotion. For the old mansion in which he was born, and the green hills and dales surrounding it, swam before his eyes, and with the expressions of his royal master's sorrow were more than he could bear. Nor was the scene in the open meadow beyond, where the troops had mustered for their daily exercise, in their dingy, hard-worn uniform, more cheering to the spirits, for it clearly manifested the scant condition of the poor king's finances.

A moment later the queen entered the closet followed by her beautiful boy, a child of some four years of age. The little prince, as soon as the door was opened, rushed at once to Lord Lucan; his head reached not much above the knees of the somewhat gigantic figure of that personage. The boy's large, dark eyes were fixed on his face, with an earnestness such as is not often seen in childhood. Alas, the

little prince was well accustomed to the sight of tears, if you only remember what his parents suffered, and with the acute apprehension of an intelligent child, he at once concluded that something had occurred to make "big Lord Lucan," as he used to call him, look so sad to-day.

With dark eyes, a fair, bright complexion, an abundance of clustering curls of golden hair, and the rest of his features equally good, the little Prince of Wales deserved the appellation of a beautiful child.

He was dressed in his usual attire, a frock of the royal Stuart tartan, with a stomacher of point lace, a cap of dark blue velvet, set somewhat fancifully on the top of his pretty head, adorned with a small plume of black and blue feathers. His tiny hands caught firm hold of those of Lucan, and his golden curls fell over that brave Irishman's arm, as in childish prattle he begs him to come and see a beautiful pony which Monsieur the Dauphin had sent him.

Very good, fast friends, indeed, are the child and the earl, though the brave Sarsfield did not live to raise a sword in defence of the rights of the prince he loved so dearly.

He lifted the boy up in his arms, fondling and caressing him as though he were his own. In fact, the little fellow knew well the power he possessed over the brave and gallant Lucan, who, turning with a smile to James and his consort, said, laughing, for the sight of the boy had driven away his sadness:

"You see your Majesties, big Lucan is fairly caught, and as he cannot say 'no' to your child, why you must excuse him, he is going to look at the Dauphin's present."

"A word first, Lord Lucan," said the queen. "I have a long letter from my beloved Florence. I shall read it to the king, and then send it to yourself and Sir Reginald."

"A long letter at last, Sire," she resumed as Lord Lucan

withdrew with the boy under his care, shall I read it aloud?"

The king assented, and placing her chair beside that of the king, she began to read.

We must here remark, however, that the date of the letter was that of the October of the previous year. Consequently it had been commenced in the form of a journal, which had been kept at random, for sometimes weeks or even months had elapsed without an entry having been made. The corn was now ready for the reaper, its golden sheaves were being gathered in. Nearly another year had passed, showing that the journal had been kept by irregular intervals, and as circumstances allowed, most probably with a view of having it at hand whenever a fortuitous chance might occur, through which she might transmit it to her friends in France.

Without any preamble, for cogent reasons addressing no particular person, it began thus :

This day I have for the last time looked on the dead face of my dear uncle. I have collected all his valuables and papers ; to-morrow his remains will be removed to Morville for interment. How much would I like to go thither for awhile, and then return to my beloved Mrs. Whitely. (1.)

How much would I give to know if one whom I hold dear is recovered of his wounds. How much to know if I am thought of as in the old, old days, when our troth was plighted beside my dying mother.

December, '91.

The king is at Kensington, and has brought with him the Count Von Arnheim. I am persecuted on all sides. I am asked to give a reason why I dislike him ; he is in favor with the king (were he in the favor of two kings my aversion would be the same). He is thirty years old, good looking, rich, and enamored of myself, so says

(1.) One of the names by which Queen Mary Beatrice was designated in the writings of the Jacobites.

the queen. She tells me I refuse him in a spirit of obstinacy, and because I am still fostering attachment to an outlaw. Both the king and queen were much exasperated to-day, because I still continue to refuse the Count, who urges his suit with a provoking pertinacity when he sees how I am opposed to it. Oh, how I wish I was a poor peasant girl, I should not be thus tortured.

January 15, 1692.

This afternoon I received a summons to attend the king in his closet; the queen was not there; my heart beat violently. I looked at my face in the pier glass as I approached him. I was ghastly white; my black robe a contrast to my pale face; my knees shook under me. Then I said to myself, "there is not much of the courage of the O'Neills in their descendant," and I mastered my fear a little, and walking slowly up the long room, I made my obeisance to the king. Standing before him, I awaited his pleasure.

Let me try and remember how his Majesty opened the attack. I was so surprised that I have to think before I can clearly recollect all that passed.

His spare little person was seized with a fit of asthmatic coughing at the moment I reached his chair. His manners are always more or less disgusting, so that he did not heed at all the nature of his cough, whilst a young lady stood immediately before him till the fit was over, for I dared not move, as he made no sign; neither did he sign for me to be seated. You know he is chary of speech and very brief in his replies. I was aware that I stood before one who is dead to the generous emotions of the heart, and, at the same time, an imperious sovereign. I felt too that the queen was purposely absent.

At last the king laid aside his handkerchief, and fixing his sparkling eyes on my face, his countenance more grave even than usual, he said:

"I wish to know why you refuse to marry one who is a faithful friend of mine. Now, reply in three or four words."

"Your Majesty, I cannot marry Count Von Arnheim," I said.

"It is woman's nonsense; you shall be his wife before we return to Holland. I have said so; it is *my* will."

"But Sire, it cannot, *must* not be," and silly woman that I am, the tears rushed to my eyes, and sobs choked my utterance.

"Enough, I have said you *shall*, you understand; now you may go."

"But, your Majesty, I *will not* marry him," said I, heedless of the power of the person whom I addressed.

The king rarely got in such a passion as on this occasion. He rose from his chair, seized me roughly by the arm, asked me how I dared set up my will against his, and in his rage, flung his handkerchiefs on the ground. I picked them up and handed them to him; he flung them on the floor again, saying: "Do you know I have power to imprison you—how dare you refuse when *we* approve? I see, I see, you want to endow the outlawed St. John with your estates; they shall be confiscated first, Madam."

His violence brought on another fit of coughing. I again picked up his handkerchiefs, and humbly asked should I remain.

"Go, Madam, go; I have told you you shall submit," was the rough reply, and I hurried to my bedroom, and when there, dear Mrs. Whitely, I fell on my knees and had a good long cry.

How can I keep my troth as I wish and marry Von Arnheim? Then, again, you know it will not do for both contracting parties to be poor; for, although I know I ought to be very rich when I am twenty-one, sometimes I fear whether a reason will not be found why I should be made poor if I continue obstinate in my refusal, as I mean to do.

January 28th.

The queen continues very cold and harsh, and her exasperation with the Princess Anne—for she persists in keeping the Marlboroughs about her—makes her worse. She told me yesterday that the king was fixed in his resolve; called me an ungrateful, obstinate minx, and said that she had ordered my *trousseau*, and fixed the day for my marriage for the middle of next month. "I bid you receive the Count properly this evening," she said; "I shall be present, and, remember, we shall enforce obedience."

I scarce know how I reached my own rooms. "This evening, this evening," I kept saying to myself. I felt as if a weight pressed on my heart. I called on him whom I must not name on this paper to come and help me, on my beloved Mr. and Mrs. Whitely; and all this while, you see, I had forgotten Him who can help when the arm of man cannot sustain us. "Oh, God, come to my aid; Oh, Lord, make haste to help me," I cried out in the anguish of my heart; in the words of the Psalmist, "In Thee I have put my trust; let me never be confounded."

Then in a little while my passion of tears was over; and much time having passed, and as I was to stand behind the queen's chair at the theatre that evening, I got up from my knees, for I knew my maid would soon come to dress me.

I am sure I see no beauty in myself to make the Count so ardent. I was as white as a lily, and my eyes fearfully swollen with crying. I assure you the white silk and pearls I wore were not whiter than my face.

I saw her majesty look sharply at me when I came forward, for the Count, I found, was to be one of the royal party. The queen is a superbly majestic woman now. She looked down on me; was a mind to crush me out of existence; and with a significant glance at Von Arnheim, she said, in an under tone, though loud enough for me to hear it:

"I have fixed the day of your nuptials for the fifteenth of next month, Count; you will thus be ready to return with the king to Holland when he leaves England in March."

My persecutor, of course, presented me his arm. It was impossible for me to speak just then, there was such a throng around us, but I looked up in the queen's face to see if I could move her to pity; but no, the glance she levelled at me was expressive of anger and determination, for her lips were compressed together, as I have seen them when she has visited the princess with any outbreak of anger, and as she swept in all her regal magnificence past me, the word "Beware!" fell from her lips.

Had I formed no prior attachment, I do not think I should have liked the Count. As it is, I feel an unconquerable aversion for the pertinacity with which he presses his suit, and I also have a vague idea that he woos not me, but the broad lands I inherit.

I took my customary place behind the queen's chair, but tears and grief combined made me feel ill, coupled with the weariness of standing for two hours. Suddenly a cold dew overspread my face, the lights on the stage seemed all to blend in one confused mass, and I remember nothing more till I found myself in a retiring room of the theatre, whither I had been carried. That terrible Count was beside me, officiously assiduous in promoting my recovery.

I returned to the palace in his care and that of one of the queen's ladies. He conducted me to my own apartments, and you may easily imagine how hard he tried to press his suit, backed as he knew himself to be by the king and queen.

At last, dearest Mrs. Whitely—for I encourage the hope that one day, however distant, your eyes may fall on these lines—I grew angry, and turning round upon him, I asked him how he could find it in his heart to persecute one who had no affections to bestow?

“Yes, that is the very thing, Madam,” he replied, with an insulting air and gesture. “I have heard of your attachment to a rebel and an outlaw, who has dared to take up arms against their Majesties. This, Madam, is the real reason why I am refused.”

My hasty temper was now thoroughly roused.

“You insult me by such language, sir,” I exclaimed. “I have no intention of marrying at present; moreover, I will never give my hand to a person who has pursued me as you have done.”

“Their Majesties—” he began.

I interrupted him at once.

“In this matter their Majesties have no right to control me, nor will I be so influenced. I again repeat I will not be forced to become your wife.”

“Madam,” he replied, “I forgive you, because you are evidently a young lady of high spirit, who, doubtless, grieves for having said unjust things as soon as she has uttered them; and as I am quite satisfied in the fact that the king and queen can bend you to compliance, I can afford for the present to be silent beneath your hard language.”

“And would you be content with my hand unwillingly bestowed,” said I, with flashing eyes, and scarcely able to articulate, in what I might almost term my righteous anger.

“Most certainly; the affection of the at first unwilling bride will follow, as a matter of course, after she has become my wife. Farewell, Madam,” he added, rising, “I shall have the pleasure of visiting you to-morrow in the presence of the queen.”

I knew well that all I that night suffered arose from a want of full and entire trust in the power of Him who alone can help us. I forgot all the calm and peace I had experienced earlier in the day, when I committed this matter and my whole being into the hands of God. And so it happened that for some time after Von Arnheim had left me, I remained overwhelmed by the shock I had received. The weather was extremely cold, and I sat for a long time heedless that the fire had almost burnt itself out, and dreading even the coming of my maid.

At length, feeling the necessity of exertion, I aroused myself,

and made up my mind to throw myself at the queen's feet in the morning, and make a last effort to excite her pity.

You may well imagine, dear Mrs. Whitely, that I passed an indifferent night. Alas, I had little to expect from the pity of Queen Mary.

It was not left to me to *put* myself in her Majesty's way, for she sent me a message desiring me to come to her half an hour before the usual time.

Of course I well knew that this was meant for a private conversation before her ladies gathered round her. When I entered her closet she was working, and without raising her head, or vouchsafing me a single glance, she began by saying:

"I understood perfectly well the cause of your illness last night. A glance at your tearful, swollen eyes is sufficient. I have sent for you in order to tell you that I shall put an end to such scenes very quickly. Your marriage will take place a fortnight earlier than I had intended. Instead of the middle of next month, it shall be solemnized the end of this."

I cast myself at the queen's feet, imploring her not to compel me to disobey her commands, by forcing on my marriage with the Count.

"Disobey!" exclaimed her Majesty, in a tone of unqualified contempt. "I would advise you to think over the penalty of disobedience to your sovereign's will. It will be imprisonment in the Tower. Withdraw, and when you next enter my presence let it be without tears."

Wandering away again from Thee, O God, by the sinfulness of my nature; leaning for help upon an arm of flesh, a reed that bendeth beneath every wind. Oh, forgive me, my Almighty Father, and teach me to see that from Thee alone true help, in the hour of direst need, can come.

Strength was given to me; I obeyed the queen's behest, and wreathed my face with smiles when next I entered her presence.

But let me not forget in this Journal to allude to one to whom I owe this looking up to God, to whom I thus owe more than tongue can express. I must premise by telling you she is but an humble waiting-woman appointed by the queen as my especial attendant. On that night, after my swoon, when I was so graciously molested by the addresses of the Count, I had remained for some time after his departure, cold and tearful, when Grace Wilmot entered the room.

A strange woman I had often thought her. Plain exceedingly she was; her complexion was swarthy, with large features, ill-formed; her eyes were fine, dark, and expressive—they redeemed, in some degree, the plainness of her face. She was tall, too, and her figure as beautiful as her features were the reverse.

She was a woman of, perhaps, forty years of age, singularly reticent, sparing in her speech as the king himself, but often very sorrowful and abstracted withal, so that I often felt Grace Wilmot had a story of her own, if she chose to tell it.

On the evening to which I have alluded, when she entered my chamber she paused, and an expression of deep sympathy seemed to pass over her hard features. She was about to speak, but as suddenly checked herself, and was, as usual, the humble, unobtrusive waiting-woman. Even the sympathy of poor Grace was much to me where all around me seemed as if their hearts were of adamant. I chanced to look in her face as she was helping to divest me of my dress; our eyes met, in mine the tears still trembled; heart opened to heart; the rich heiress was no more remembered; the woman looked upon the woman, differing only from each other by their social positions; the barriers raised by the conventionalities of life were for the time thrown down, and before I well knew what I was about, my head rested on the bosom of Grace, and her warm tears were falling in a plenteous shower on my brow.

“Dear young lady, dear child, how I have wished to speak, and dared not by reason of the humbleness of my position,” she said: “but now, blessed be God and his Virgin Mother, the well-springs of sympathy are open; for, oh, my lamb, it is a terrible thing to suffer, and have none to cheer us with a consoling word.”

I recovered somewhat, and raised my head from her bosom.

“My good Grace,” I said, in much bewilderment, “you have spoken words none dare to utter here. Are you of the proscribed faith of Rome?”

“Even so, Madam, and greatly have I drank of the chalice of human suffering; but I will show you whence I draw hope and consolation. But Grace Wilmot, the handmaid of a lady of rank such as yours, still presumes to tell her mistress how to gather strength at the same fount, in absence of the Sacraments now so long denied us. From this, Madam, I have drawn my strength.”

She drew from her pocket two small and well worn volumes.

The one was a copy of the Four Gospels, the other an edition of that all but inspired book, The Imitation of Christ.

She turned over its pages, and pointed to one chapter, headed :
'De l'amour de Jesus sur toutes choses.'

It was a French copy of A Kempis, by which I understood my maid to be an educated woman.

"That one chapter, Madam," said she, "is often on my lips, and I hope ever in my heart. At a time of grievous suffering an aged priest bid me study it well. Since then I have realized more clearly the fact contained therein, that one must 'not trust nor rely on a windy reed;' *for all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall fade like the flower of the grass.* Have an implicit confidence in God, Madam. He will even work miracles rather than abandon those who put their trust in Him."

"But, my good Grace," said I, wanting, verily, the simple, unquestioning faith of my handmaiden, whom I was fast learning to regard with respect, "this marriage is resolved on by those who have me in their power; imprisonment and the confiscation of my property will be the alternative."

Grace sorrowfully shook her head, seeing that, as yet, I had so much to learn before I could get in the right way, and her plain countenance seemed for the time marvellously beautiful by reason of the superhuman expression by which it was animated, as she said, with her splendid eyes lifted up to heaven:

"There is a King above all earthly kings, before whom the greatest of earthly monarchs is but as the dust of the earth. Bear up, Madam, this marriage will not, shall not be."

I felt touched, and in spite of myself it seemed as if the spirit of prophecy which animated those of old had descended on this extraordinary being, in whom, though about my person ever since I had come to the palace, I had discerned nothing beyond the most rigorous punctuality in the discharge of her duties; respect, without the slightest tinge of subserviency; humility, without any approach to abjection, and so careful a performance of her employments that it would have been impossible for the most exacting person to discover neglect. If Grace was required at a certain time, there she was; if she was wanted to execute a certain task, it was done without delay. In short, I recognized in the exact fidelity of my handmaiden that which, until now, I had not observed or noticed in the light in which I now regarded them. She had all

the qualities of one who studies to embody into her life the holy maxims of the Gospel, reduced to that practical performance which lead to perfection and which constitute sanctity.

All proud reserve between Grace and myself was now crushed beneath my feet. I had yearned for sympathy ever since the day my feet had first crossed the threshold of the queen's court. I now possessed it. I had met a kindred mind, in a quarter in which one would least have expected to find it. Moreover, that mind was intelligent and cultivated; above all else, it was educated in the highest sense of the word, in what Father Lawson termed *the science of the saints*, and had held forward to me as the most useful knowledge first to be gained, without which all else was vain and hurtful.

We knelt together in prayer, above all else we prayed for resignation to the inevitable. Then when I had lain down, Grace, as usual, came to draw around my bed the heavy, satin curtains, and wished me her customary "good-night."

Impelled by a sudden impulse, I threw aside the curtain and called her back. I arose, and drawing her reluctant face to mine, I kissed her brow, saying:

"Grace, dear Grace, be my friend."

She bent down and kissed the hand which still rested on the curtain. Her humility humbled me, and her answer was worthy of herself.

"Grace, Madam, feels honored by the friendship of her mistress, and it shall not cause her to forget the lowliness of her own position."

I laid my head upon the pillow resigned, I might almost say happy, such is the influence of a virtuous example.

I resolved before many days were over to ask Grace to tell me the story of her life. Outwardly there was no change in our respective positions. We each seemed, without saying a word about the matter, instinctively to understand that there must be no alteration. Indeed, when together, but very little passed between us, and yet her influence bore upon every word and action of my present life.

The queen must have observed the change, and doubtless attributed it to the fear of her threat of incarceration, and acting upon the change, gave me to understand that my marriage would not take place till the time she had first stated, and would be solemn-

ized in the Chapel at Windsor Castle, the king intending to recruit his health in the country for a few weeks before his visit to Holland. Of course the Count's visits were frequent, and his odious attentions became daily more and more obtrusive. He naturally gave himself more latitude on account of the passiveness with which I received them.

January 27th, 1692.

Last night I was more particularly molested by the Count than has hitherto been the case. I entered my own chamber with the old weary feeling of depression at my heart. Perhaps it was increased by the terror I felt when the queen described to me the bridal robe she had ordered to be sent to Windsor for my wedding day.

Of course, Grace observed my languid look, enforced by spirits out of tone. It is only at times like these that she steps, as it were, prominently forward to bear me up, as a mother extends her hand to save her child from falling when making its first steps.

"Madam, you are forgetting the lesson you have been trying to learn; that is why you are sorrowful to-night," said she, as she unfastened the bandeau of pearls which bound back my hair.

"My bridal dress is ordered, Grace; we leave for Windsor early in the week," I said, half vexed just now, that there had been no look of sympathy in the expression of those hard, grim features of hers.

"Well, Madam, and what then?"

"And what then," said I, reiterating her words. "Do you forget that the queen means this for the beginning of the end?"

There was displeasure in the tones of my voice; I knew it, I had spoken half in anger.

"Only in so far as God wills to let His creatures have their way for some inscrutable purpose of His own; if so, vain is your rebellion to His will. I have told you you have nothing to do but to pray, and be patient and resigned, leaning on God alone. Madam, you have but very little faith."

The proud spirit within me was chafing as I sat beneath the hands of Grace, at the plainness of her words, conveying, as they did, a sharp rebuke. I changed color I knew, for I felt the warm blood tingling my cheeks, but I held my peace. She saw the flushed temples, too, but spoke no word. I inwardly admired her courage.

Dear Mrs. Whitely was present to my remembrance. When had I ever heard *her* murmur? I have no doubt Grace knows the amount of influence she now exercises over me; for my good she uses it unsparingly. Perfect passiveness and resignation, these are the weapons she would have me use; nothing short of this contents her.

I made an exertion to shake off my depression during her temporary absence on some little duty for me. When she returned I was in better spirits.

"Grace," I said, "I am going to ask a favor of you."

"I will do whatever you wish, Madam."

"I want you to tell me the story of your life."

A painful expression flitted across her hard, rugged features, tears filled her eyes, she made me no reply.

"Does my request give you pain, Grace? I long to know how it is you are here attending upon me, filling so humble a position; how you became acquainted with my dear dead uncle's friend, Father Lawson, and—in fact, I want to know all about you, Grace."

"I cannot refuse you any request, Madam; it is my duty to obey you."

I felt annoyed, and answered:

"But I do not want you to make a duty of what I ask as a favor, Grace; simply forget that I ever asked the question."

"No, Madam; the lady who has sufficient virtue to listen to the admonitions of her servant, and allow her to become her monitress, surely should not find her inferior too proud to narrate her painful story."

"I do not attend the queen to-night," I replied; "we have several hours before us; be seated, Grace."

She pushed away the chair opposite to my own, which I had motioned for her to use, and placing an ottoman at my feet, seated herself thereon. Thus her face was partly in the shadow, still the fire-light revealed to me that she was moved by some strong emotion; her usually pale countenance was flushed, and I observed tears trickle slowly down her cheeks.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GRACE WILMOT'S STORY.



WAS the only and beloved child of a rich citizen; he was a wealthy goldsmith of Cheapside, and his name was Edward Mayfield. Unfortunately for my future welfare, my mother died when I was but fourteen years of age.

Up to that time, I had been carefully and religiously brought up in the tenets of our proscribed faith.

Personally, I had no reason to be proud. As I advanced towards womanhood, I saw that my glass reflected only the face of a girl, plain even to ugliness, with large, hard features, and a swarthy complexion.

I had soon sense enough to discover, when amongst the young beauties of my sex and age, as years passed on, that the more plainly I dressed the better, so far as my personal appearance was concerned. I chose only dark colors, and except a costly gold chain which my dear father presented me with on my sixteenth birthday, I scrupulously abstained from wearing any ornament beyond, perhaps, the occasional use of a ring.

Jewels I might have had in abundance; the costliest gauds of fashion might have been mine in profusion; satins, and velvets, and laces, and exquisite scents, I abjured them all. There was an inordinate pride in my studied simplicity. I saw that I was plain even to ugliness, and at last Edward Mayfield's only daughter was pronounced a devotee, because she never dressed but in sombre garments, and ordered them to be made with extreme simplicity.

Sometimes that inward voice which speaks interiorly to all of us, seemed as though calling me from a world for which I was scarcely fitted, to bury myself in the retirement of a religious life; well would it have been for me had I followed the call.

I stifled it, saying to myself: "My father is growing aged; for my sake, and in order to endow me with all his wealth, he has never contracted a second marriage. When he dies, I will leave the world; alas, an earthly love soon filled my heart. I felt within me an insatiable thirst for knowledge; my dear father helped me to gratify it at any cost. I devoted myself to the study

of Latin and French. I made myself mistress of the best authors of our own country. I played well on the guitar, and filled up my time with various ornamental works.

Here Grace for a few moments paused, and I expressed my astonishment that a gentlewoman, highly educated, should fill the position she occupied.

"You will not be surprised," she said, "when you have heard my story to the end."

At length she continued :

Mixing but little with others of my sex, more from an indomitable vanity on account of my want of beauty than for any other cause, I reached my twenty-fourth year, about the time that all London was busy with preparations for the marriage of the present queen with the Prince of Orange.

One evening I was seated with my dear father, when the arrival of a gentleman from the palace was notified. His errand was to consult my father about some jewels which the king intended to give as a wedding present to his niece. Charles Wilmot, for such was the name of the messenger, was shown into the room where I was seated ; the conversation betwixt my father and himself was a long one. He was offered refreshments, of which he partook, and departed shortly afterwards, promising to call again the next evening.

He came about the same hour, and brought the order from the king for a set of jewels composed of pearls and diamonds.

On this evening he conversed much with myself. He looked over my books, spoke of his tastes as similar to my own, and fascinated me with his witty and animated conversation.

That visit was the prelude to many others ; at last, we read, and sang, and played together, and I had arrived at that point at which a dead vacuum seems to take place when the missing friend is absent.

At length, from being merely a visitor in the evening, when my father and myself shared one common apartment, Wilmot not unfrequently called when I was alone in the morning ; frequently, the pretext for these visits would be to bring me a new book or a piece of music.

Gradually the attachment sprung up in my heart which sealed my future life with misery.

He made me an offer of marriage. What did I care for his pov-

erty? I knew I should have money, and I was told he was a spend-thrift, a gambler. No matter, I could reform him, and for the first time in my life, when he asked me in marriage and was refused, I had words with my father.

I have told you, Madam, that I made a point of never entering into company. Alas for me, I overcame my reluctance; female vanity even whispered to me, that as my hand was sought with such pertinacity, I was, perhaps, less plain than I had considered myself to me.

During the Christmas festivities of that year, there was to be a large gathering at the house of John Golding, a rich citizen. I had fancied his daughter Alice was my friend; she was one of the very few of my own sex with whom I had been on terms of intimacy.

On the night in question, I was standing apart from the gay throng of young people talking with Wilmot, when turning faint, he left me to fetch a glass of water. I had drawn aside, and had thrown myself on a couch in a small ante-room opening out of that which I had left, when I heard the murmur of voices of persons evidently standing by the spot I had vacated.

"It is true, Elinor, quite true; he has proposed to that ugly woman Grace, and they are going to be married."

The voice was that of my friend Alice. I know not why I should have wished to hear more that was painful, for a deathly feeling had seized on my heart. I lay perfectly still, anxious to hear the reply.

"Grace Mayfield going to be married, I do not believe it," ejaculated another person in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes Elinor, and Grace Mayfield has made me the most unhappy of women. Wilmot's attentions to me before he met her, have made me the talk of the whole city, but *I* am not an heiress," and the words fell with great bitterness from the lips of Alice, "but one of a large family. No one, however, can imagine for a moment, that Grace, ugly as she is, is married for anything but her father's money. She must be one of the vainest of women if she fancies, for a moment, that she is married for love of herself."

Scalding tears of wounded pride and indignation fell from my eyes. At that moment I heard the voice of Wilmot, my fair enemies addressed him. I heard him say, "Miss Mayfield has been taken ill and has gone to the ante-room, while I went to fetch her some wine and water."

Of course, they well knew I had overheard their conversation, and had the good sense rather to be condemned for unkindness by him, than to insult me by following him into the ante-room.

I made my adieus early. I was ill; anything, in short, to get home. Why was I made so ugly, asked I, in the bitterness of my soul, for the barbed arrow had entered very deeply. I would not hear of Wilmot accompanying me; he saw me safe in my chair, and I cried the whole way home.

Wilmot never came again after the quarrel with my father, well would it have been for me had I never seen him after that night.

The old, old happy days had forever fled; my books had lost their charm; my music its melody; my father his love; rather ought I not to say, I had lost my love for *him*.

On one of these days, Father Lawson, an old friend of my father's, called at the house in Cheapside. He was vested as a clergyman of the Church of England as a disguise.

Poor father, he opened his whole heart to his early friend. At length I was summoned; my father had gone to his shop; I found the priest alone.

"Grace, my child," he said, "your father is unhappy, it is in your power to restore peace to his heart and home."

"How?" said I, "has he complained that I have robbed him of it?"

"Listen to me, Grace." Priest though he was, I yielded but a sullen compliance. "For *your* sake, to make *you*, child as you were when your mother died, the entire mistress of his home, your doting father remained a widower; *for you*, to leave you the heiress of his wealth. He put no woman in your dead mother's place; he does not wish to forbid you to marry subject to his better sense and experience, he only forbids you to marry this man Wilmot. Your old father loves you, Grace, and knows that man unworthy of your love, and that he seeks you only for what you will inherit. Tell me child, you will do your father's will."

Here Grace paused, and covered her face with her hands; I saw the tears trickle through her fingers. She then continued: I exclaimed with bitterness of tone and manner:

"Oh yes, I see and understand it all. Edward Mayfield's daughter is so ugly, so *repulsively* ugly, that she has no single attraction beyond that of her father's money bags."

"You shock me, child," said the priest; "God made you what you are, thank Him that He made you not blind and deformed; thank Him that He gave you fine mental powers, a plenteous home, a loving father how dare you hurl the gifts of your Creator in His face?"

For a moment I was awed, and I burst into tears.

The good Father fancied my heart was touched; ah no, it had to be purified in the furnace of long years of tribulation and suffering, ere that heart of adamant was softened.

"You will break off this match, Grace?"

"No, I will not break it off; my father is unjust and cruel; I *will* marry Charles Wilmot."

Father Lawson rose from his seat.

"And you will live to rue the day you lay your hand in his. Misguided girl, your father loves you; you are breaking his heart; it is because he loves you with a matchless love, that he forbids this union."

"Then is he selfish," I dared to say, "and he would keep me ever with him, forgetting that the old have to die, the young to live."

Ah, shall I ever forget that day. Father Lawson drew aside for a moment, too shocked to speak. I buried my face in my hands, but I heard him say:

"Oh my God, just and merciful, why is it that parental love flows downwards with so strong a current, and oftentimes returns in so thin a stream; visit thou this soul with suffering in thy mercy. Lord, purify it in the furnace of tribulation, so that thou call it back to thee at last."

He turned to leave the room; I called him back, awed by the words he had uttered; but no, what more could he do? He left me to myself and went to seek my injured father. To me, Wilmot only showed the fair side of his character; if he spoke of my dear father it was not with contempt or anger, but rather with a feigned forbearance.

He met me the evening after my interview with Father Lawson, asked me if it was in vain to hope for my father's permission to marry, and on my replying in the affirmative, suggested marriage in spite of his refusal.

In an evil hour I acceded to his wish. There was a small annual income to which I had succeeded in right of my deceased mother,

of which my father could not deprive me. We agreed to lend to time to heal the breach that was sure to ensue, and be married at once.

I packed up the fine trinkets my dear father had, from time to time, forced on my acceptance, together with my wearing apparel, and sent it away privately the night before I left my home.

My father scarcely spoke to me that memorable evening; he was ill and care-worn; he was in delicate health, and I felt a pang as I stole a glance at him when in the act of handing him a silver cup containing his evening draught of hot spiced wine.

Tears stood in his eyes; they looked dim and bloodshot, and his hand trembled as he took the cup from mine, as if he had the palsy.

"Read to me from some good book, Grace, before you go to bed," he said, speaking as he used to do before we quarrelled. "Ah yes, here is my favorite, *The Following of Christ*; let it be that chapter—'True comfort is to be sought in God alone.'"

I did as he desired, and read on till I came to the verse: "All human comfort is vain and short." He repeated these words after me twice, as though he pondered over them.

I had constituted all his human comfort. I did not think of it at the time, but later those words remained indelibly engraved on my memory.

"God bless you, my child," he said, as I pressed my lips to his forehead, and drawing down my face to his he kissed me long and passionately.

Had he a presage of what was about to take place, or a foreshadowing of personal misfortune, to be brought on by the cruelty of his own child?

Fond, indulgent, betrayed father!

I had left the house before the servants were down in the morning.

An hour later I was the wife of Charles Wilmot.

After we were married we went to Soho, where we engaged a lodging commensurate with our present position, till, as he jestingly remarked,

"Your father shall have come to his senses."

These words were the first which annoyed me; it was not so much the words themselves as the tone and manner in which they were uttered.

The following morning I wrote to my father petitioning for his forgiveness.

I had no reply.

Weeks passed on and lengthened into months. I had become a mother. Again and again I wrote; no answer ever came.

I had long become used to cruel insult from the lips of my husband. At first I rebelled, and repaid insult with insult, scorn with scorn. "Fool," he would oftentimes say, "to fancy such a gorilla-like face was acceptable except for money." The staff of well-paid servants in my father's home had prevented the necessity of household duties on my part. Thus I was ignorant of many things which I should have known had my mother lived. This was a source of bitter invective on my husband's part. I quickly found that I must learn many things of which I was ignorant, and moreover, that I must work hard, and save, and economize, that he might spend, and gamble, and drink. I had united myself to one who added the grossest brutality to his other vices. When the birth of my first child occurred, it brought the expenses incidental to my situation, deteriorating from the comforts I had managed to procure him. My pretty babe was but two months old—pretty as its wretched mother was the reverse—when I received the greatest indignity a man can inflict on a woman, a heavy blow on the face.

"That blow cannot well make your face darker than nature has made it," he said. My eyes filled with water, my old spirit had died out, I said not a word. I was beginning to see that I was about to pass through the ordeal of tribulation Father Lawson had spoken of.

A few days later I passed down Cheapside in a sedan chair. I had not dared to seek my father's face from the time of my shameful flight. I drew aside the curtain of the chair to look again at the old house. It was shut up; the shop was closed, the business then had not been sold.

A sickening dread seized on my heart. My father, was he dead? Ah, my God, grant that I may see him once again.

I ordered the men to enquire of the neighbors if Mr. Mayfield were yet alive, and if so, if they could tell where he lived.

He had suddenly vacated the house; they believed he had retired to Highgate with one servant, who was to keep house for

him. He had become imbecile, the neighbors said, after his daughter left him.

I hurried to the village of Highgate, and from enquiries I made I ascertained that my dear father rented a small house, insignificant for a man of his ample means, the direction of which I obtained. The cottage stood a little way back from the high road; a trimly kept garden, gaily adorned with flowers, stretched in front of the house.

I knocked at the door, predetermined to trust no longer to letters. It was answered by a middle-aged woman, who had been cook in my father's house at the time of my marriage.

She started when she beheld me. "Mrs. Wilmot!" she exclaimed, with an accent of surprise.

"How is my father, Deborah?" I said; "I must see him at once."

"It is impossible, ma'am; the sight of you would make him worse than he already is."

"Woman, stand aside," I exclaimed; and pushing past her, I entered the parlor. What a sight met my eyes! My beloved father, attenuated, worn almost to a shadow, was seated on a couch, talking incoherently to himself.

"Father, father," I said, "do you not know me; I am Grace, your daughter Grace."

"Grace, Grace," he repeated; "yes, I had a daughter of that name once, long years ago; but she died, and then I was left all alone."

"Do you not know me, father?" I said, and I kissed the thin, shrivelled hand; and then, bending down my head, I laid his hand upon it. Alas! alas! he was not conscious of the act.

Then he rambled on again, but of me he took no heed. It was another phase in the punishment I so well deserved. What should I do was then the question. To leave the house was madness. Deborah looked daggers at me, and I involuntarily trembled at hearing the voice of a man below stairs.

I had noticed, too, a wedding ring on her finger, and nothing doubted but that the sudden disappearance of my father from the city was owing to the machinations of this woman.

I was standing at the window, and seeing a boy asking an alms, I beckoned him to me.

I showed him half a crown. "Will you earn this?" I said. His eyes sparkled with delight.

I tore out a leaf from my pocket-book, and scrawled in pencil these words:

"Come to me directly; I am with my father; for pity's sake do not delay."

I gave the boy a shilling, told him to seek the address written on the card, and to bring the gentleman back with him, when I would give him eighteen pence more.

I then sat down as patiently as might be to await his arrival, ever and again trying to awaken in my father's darkened mind some memory of the past. A signal failure attended my exertions.

At length I sang the first stanza of a song which had been a favorite of his in the dear old times.

He started, pressed his forehead with his hand, and exclaimed:

"Sing it again; my dead daughter, Grace, used to sing that song."

"I am Grace," I said. "Now bless me, father, I have come back to live with you and take care of you." Alas! alas! his last blessing was bestowed on me the night before I left him to the mercy of hirelings. And why should I speak thus; were they more merciless than his own child?

I drove back my tears because I found it pleased him to hear me sing. One after another I sang all the old songs which I knew he had liked the best.

"Stay with me," he said; "do not go away again, I like to hear you sing," and he put up his dear aged face and kissed me, and I felt wondrously happy, though he knew not I was his own Grace.

And so we sat hand in hand, and I sang the time away, I never thinking of the woman Deborah, but looking for my husband, because I should not fear confronting her when he was with me.

I saw a man leave the house, and then return with a coach, into which many parcels and boxes were placed, and the man getting in, the coach drove away.

I had my suspicions, and as I sat by the window I marked down the number of the coach.

At last I saw my husband and the boy hasten up the garden. I flew to the door and admitted him, detaining the boy till I should see if we wanted him.

To my infinite pain, my husband looked coolly at my dear father,

“Is this the end of his wealth?” he said, with a contemptuous glance round the room, adding, “a clear case of lunacy that, I should imagine.”

God forgive me, how I did hate him just then.

I arose and closed the door.

“Deborah, the former cook, is here,” I said; “she is now married. The house in the city is closed. Do you not see some villainy has been practiced. It is our business to look into the state of my father’s property, to enquire if his valuable stock was sold before he left the city.

The wretch whom I addressed at first looked at me with lack-lustre eyes. He was generally under the influence of liquor, and either half stupid or in a state of semi-intoxication.

After a short time he recovered sufficiently to resolve on calling up the woman. We rung the bell three times; there was no answer. We went down stairs, above, all over the house. We were the sole inmates, and the open drawers and boxes showed they had been rifled of their contents. We then discovered that there was a back entrance to the house, by which the woman Deborah had evidently decamped.

My husband sent the boy to Soho with a letter to our landlord, bidding him bring to Highgate the servant and baby, and he himself went to the nearest magistrate, laid the case before him, and gave the number of the hackney coach, so that some of the property might be traced.

I made a comfortable meal for my beloved father. It was sweet to serve him, though he did not know me. Then while he partook of it I examined the house. I recognized many well-remembered articles, though the best had disappeared. There was a good stock of linen, a small quantity of silver, but none of the fine old silver services. I then put him to bed in a room evidently intended for his use. He followed me about docile and submissive as a child. I sang to him meanwhile. It was the happiest moment I had known since I had left him when, for the second time, he drew me to him and kissed me.

I moved about his room after he was in bed. I heard him speak, and turning round, I saw his hands joined. I listened; he was saying the Our Father, but not correctly. Then he made a recommendation of himself to God—this he repeated many times; prayed

for his dead wife and child, and awakening me to the sinful past, he repeated the words I had last read to him :

“All human comfort is vain and short.”

At last my husband returned, and a little while later the servant and child. The officials of justice were on the track of Deborah.

The result of their enquiries ended in the recovery of many valuable articles and their committal to prison. My father, it appeared, had never recovered the effect of my guilty flight, and had very shortly fallen into a state in which he was irresponsible for his actions. Thus he was easily the tool of this artful woman. They induced him to convert much of his costly stock into cash, of which, between fast living and what they plundered him of, the whole amount had gone; all that remained being a couple of houses he had purchased years since, one of which, my early home, was now unlet.

Insult and wrong were daily heaped on my head by my husband, who had always counted, sooner or later, on my winning my father's forgiveness and obtaining a handsome property. To obtain permission to keep my beloved imbecile parent near me, I allowed him to sell the home I have spoken of, but the term of peace effected by yielding to his brutality was of short duration. In all I suffered I recognized the hand of retributive justice, and considered myself as one undergoing a term of penance. I felt that if those who are righteous bear their cross without murmuring, how much more was it incumbent on me to do so.

It was at last with a kind of melancholy pleasure that I heard my dear father speak of and mourn for me as one dead. Far better he should have entertained that idea than the correct one.

I knew my old friend, Father Lawson, was often in London, and I sent him my address, at a time when I knew my husband (a Protestant in faith) would be absent.

I longed to let him see that the days of purification were passing over my head.

Of course, my poor father retained no recollection of him. I saw his eyes fill with tears when I led him in. I told him my whole story, the kind of husband the man had made whom I had chosen to marry in spite of the prayers and wishes of my best friends. I told him how my father's wealth had vanished like chaff before the wind; how my pretty babe was pining away before my face; how I was abused, ill-treated, struck. I laid my hands on that of him

who had loved me with such matchless love, my father, and I said, "In singing to him and soothing him is my sweetest consolation; my greatest fear lest my tyrant husband should separate me from him;" adding, "think you, father, I am redeeming the past? I have schooled myself to the strictest patience; I have learned to be reviled and not revile again, to work for *him* to reap, to be silent under his abuse, to regard all that happens to me as the penalty of sin and folly, to consider that my future life must be a cross borne in the spirit of expiation."

"The days have, indeed, come," he said, "of your earthly purification. Continue thus to atone for the past, which you cannot now recall." He then drew from his pocket that French copy of the *Imitation of Christ* which I showed you, and turning down the chapter headed, "The Love of Jesus above all things," told me to make that chapter my daily study.

My baby died; a little girl was born to me; it faded away and died, too, when it was but a few months old. How pitiful a sight it was to witness the love of my dear father for that child, whom he would call by no other name than Grace.

My grief was very great at first after consigning my little ones to the grave. At last a dull apathy stole over me, and I finally rejoiced that the sinless ones had been gathered home by their Heavenly Father's mercy before their own earthly father could teach them to sin.

At last the day of release came, but not before my husband had well nigh stripped our house of every comfort—I may almost add, of every necessary.

His brutality had become unbounded on account of my constant refusal to commit my poor father to an asylum. He was harmless, quiet, and docile; if he was now poor it was my work, and what was still left was his. I resisted every endeavor to part me from him.

At last my husband sickened with the small-pox. I nursed him carefully and showed him every attention possible. The crisis arrived, and the physician declared there was no hopes of recovery.

He could not see. The violence of the disorder had deprived him of his sight some days before his death. I strove to awaken him to repentance, but his heart was callous; he died and made no sign.

My old father and myself were thus alone in the desolate house at Highgate, but the shadow of death still lingered by my hearth. Its touch fell very gently on the only creature who attached me to the world.

It was a pleasant day in Spring. I had drawn an easy chair under the porch in the back garden, and with my work in my hand (for I now had not enough to live upon save by adding to our little income, by embroidering gay scarfs and dresses for the court ladies), I sang my old songs, while my dear, wronged father sat and listened.

These were the happiest hours I had known since I buried my little ones.

I chanced to speak to him, but he did not answer. I fancied he had not heard me, and I spoke again; still no answer. I looked up alarmed; his head had fallen on his breast, I leant over him; he was dead!

A burst of tears put an end for the present to the story of poor Grace. I thought myself very cruel, dear Mrs. Whitely, that I had pressed her to call back these sad memories of the past. After a while she recovered herself, and stopped my protestations of sorrow that I had urged her to tell me her story.

I have not much more to say, Madam, she continued. A few days later I, the solitary mourner, followed the remains of the once rich citizen to the village churchyard. I was loath to leave a place hallowed at once by such painful memories and sweet recollections of my little ones and my poor father; but Father Lawson, who called on me whilst my father was yet unburied, urged me to do so.

I had not enough left to live upon. I could not bear to be with children, or should have devoted myself to education; but my lost ones would have been ever before my eyes. I then applied to the queen, introducing myself as the daughter of the jeweller who had set the jewels which King Charles had given her on her marriage, and telling her the heads of my story, craved any employment, even of a menial nature, about the palace.

From Father Lawson I learned that you, Madam, were one of the favorite ladies of our dear, saintly ex-queen. He told me how it was you were here, and charged me to aid you, if in my poor power to do so.

"My poor, poor Grace," I said, and quite overcome by her sorrowful state, I laid my head on her shoulder, and gave way to a flood of tears.

Then after a while I became calm, and told Grace the example of her courage, under trial so unexampled, ought, indeed, to give me strength.

"Madam," she replied, "my trials were the result of obstinate folly, not so yours; but, courage and patience, even should the eve of the day fixed for your bridal bring no help, the morrow's morn may set you free. God will not let this marriage take place. Only be calm and submissive apparently to the queen's will, and all will yet be well."

After the recital of Grace's story I became more and more attached to her, though I do not like that a woman with a mind like her's should be employed in menial offices. As far as she is concerned, nothing seems to disturb her or to come amiss; she accepts all, I believe, as an atonement for her early transgressions.

February 12th, 1692.

The fifteenth is appointed for my nuptials. Grace still begs me to bear up and feign composure. The task is so hard I feel as if I should give way. Oh, for her unwavering faith!

February 13th.

Grace has just entered with my bridal robe, a present from the queen. It is a truly royal present.

The petticoat is of white satin, looped up alternately with orange blossoms and sprays of pearls and diamonds; the train of Brussels point, the long veil is also of Brussels lace. Oh, my God, support me, strengthen me. Am I to be robed a victim for the sacrifice? Grace still says no, it shall never be; God will not permit it. Oh, Reginald, Reginald, my betrothed!

February 14th.

I cried all night long. Last evening the Count was overwhelming, the queen kind and even affectionate in her manner; even the king less boorish. They talked openly about my embarking for Holland with the king and the count early in March. Grace is calm and composed, though to-morrow seals my fate. She rebukes me for the slightest manifestation of distrust in God's infinite power.

February 15th.

Last evening I stood with Grace at a window of my chamber overlooking the park. The king and count had been out since early morning enjoying the pleasures of the chase. My eyes streamed with tears. "A few hours, Grace, and I shall be the bride of the Count," I said, "unless I run away, to be brought back, mayhap, and taken to the Tower."

Suddenly the king's hounds appear through a break in the trees, and a goodly company of knights and nobles, with the king at their head; but there is no mirth amongst them, they all seem sad and sorrowful, we say.

A few moments later the cause was explained. Half a dozen men slowly advanced bearing between them a plank, on which lay the form of a man, evidently covered to hide some appalling sight beneath.

I turned sick and faint, my heart seemed to stand still; a cold sweat poured down my face; I sickened as, in imagination, I pictured to myself the ghastly burthen stretched beneath the dark covering that, improvised for the occasion, had been thrown over it. Grace opened the casement; the murmur of many voices fell upon my ear; I heard the name of Von Arnheim; I saw the ghastly upturned face as the covering was drawn aside, and I sank fainting in her arms.

* * * * *

May, 1692.

The pleasant Spring time has put forth its young green blossoms. Three months have passed since the night that heralded my release from the meditated sacrifice, and I am only now recovered enough to resume my pen, and give my dear Mrs. Whitely a little more news before my faithful Grace consigns these papers to a trusty messenger who will see that they reach her hands.

The horror of the death-struck face of the hapless young Count, who was to have been forced upon me in marriage on the following morning, together with the mental anxiety that succeeded that terrible night, and the revulsion which that sight occasioned, ended in a nervous fever, from which I am but slowly recovering.

Her Majesty, softened by my submissive demeanor respecting my marriage, has been kind and sympathizing. Especially was she touched when she was told that the shock was made so frightfully sudden by my own eyes beholding the body of the Count as it was carried into the castle.

The Count was an ardent huntsman, and had entered with the king into the full spirit of the chase, but had managed to separate himself from the rest of the company. To come up again with his party he had made an ineffectual attempt to force his horse over a gate. The animal stumbled and fell, throwing his rider, whose head, coming in contact with a block of stone, had produced almost immediate death. He spoke but a few words, describing only the manner of his death, and bidding them bear his dying love to myself. Blame me not, dear Mrs. Whitely, nor let another party deem me unworthy of his love, that I shed tears to the memory of this hapless Count. I wept over his sudden death and his unrequited love.

For a long while I was delirious. When at last I recovered enough to think over the past, I called Grace to my bedside.

“Dear Grace,” I said, “do you remember saying *it would never take place*? How much do I owe you—first, the example of your unwavering trust and confidence in the Providence of God; and, secondly, that, following your counsel, I became passive in the hands of the queen. How bitterly would she have felt had I opposed her to the last; and, after all, the Providence of God had decreed that union should never be.”

I have written to another person, dear Mrs. Whitely, still very dear to me; but there seems no chance of my leaving this place, so that I have released him from all engagements should he wish to be freed. It will please you, I know, to see that I have found in Grace a wise and an invaluable friend.

“Poor Florence,” said the queen, when she had finished reading her packet of papers, which the king had listened to with intense interest, “she has had and still has much to suffer. It is, indeed, a vague matter as to when she will be able to return to us. But St. John shall have the perusal of these papers immediately. It will please him to see how true she is to her plighted troth, and he will, of course, be at no difficulty to surmise the reasons for which she expresses a willingness to release him from his engagement.”

“Send for St. John at once, let him come here,” said the king.

The queen rung a small silver bell. It was answered by a page, who was forthwith sent in search of Sir Reginald.

Between his wounds, illness, and anxiety, St. John was, indeed, a very different person to the Sir Reginald who, two years since, had visited Sir Charles at Morville Grange. His eyes sparkled with pleasure when he saw the bulky packet in the hands of the king. His greatest torture consisted in his inability to release Florence from her state of bondage; for he argued, and with reason, if the king and queen tried to force her into marrying once, the scheme may be repeated, and in the end with success.

“Tut, man,” said the king, good-humoredly, trying to rouse him out of his depression, “go and read your letter. It ought to make you happy the thought alone of your betrothed lady’s constancy to you.” As the king spoke he held forth the packet, delicately giving, at the same time, the sum of fifteen pistoles, folded in a small piece of paper. It was thus the fallen king used to relieve the indigent Jacobites whose modesty prevented them from applying to him for pecuniary aid.

Darker and more sad grew the fortunes of the hapless exiles. They felt no trial which had befallen them, after the usurpation of William, more than witnessing the sufferings of the devoted Jacobites, who, with unswerving loyalty, had given up their estates and fortunes, and were, in fact, starving in a foreign land for their sakes, the town of St. Germain being filled with Scotch, English, and Irish families.

Not only did James and his consort practise themselves the most rigorous self-denial, but also their children, as soon as they could be made to understand the miseries of

these poor people, devoted all their pocket-money to their relief, the little princess even paying for the education of several of the daughters of the emigrants, and steadily resisting all persuasion to lessen her little fund by the purchase of toys for herself.

Months passed on, and brought with them such suffering that Louis XIV pointed out to James the necessity of disbanding his household troops. The French king was the arbiter of his destiny; to him the unfortunate James owed whatever he possessed. A large number of these unfortunate gentlemen then passed into the service of Louis.

“A desolating reform” Mary Beatrice had truly termed this reduction of the military establishment at St. Germain, and an affecting scene took place between James and the remainder of the brave followers of Dundee. These consisted of 150 officers, all men of honorable birth. They knew themselves to be a burthen on James, and begged leave to form themselves into a company of private sentinels, asking only to be allowed to choose their own officers. James assented, and they went to St. Germain to be reviewed by him before they were incorporated with the French army.

A few days later they dressed themselves in accoutrements borrowed of a French regiment, and drew up in order, in a place through which he was to pass as he went to the chase.

The king enquired who they were, and was astonished to find them the same men with whom, in garb more becoming their rank, he had received at his levée; and struck with the levity of his own amusement, compared with the misery of those who were suffering for him, instead of going forward to the chase, he returned to the palace full of sad and sorrowful thoughts.

When the day arrived on which he was to review them, he passed along their ranks, and wrote in his pocket-book, with his own hand, the name of every one of these gentlemen, returning his thanks to each of them in particular. Then he removed to the front, and taking off his hat, bowed to the whole body.

The poor king's intention was to withdraw, but he returned, bowed to them again, and then burst into a passionate fit of tears.

The regiment knelt, bent their eyes downwards, then rose, and passed the king with the usual honors of war.*

The speech which the king made to them ended with these words :

“Should it be the will of God ever to restore me to my throne, it would be impossible for me ever to forget your sufferings. There is no rank in my armies to which you might not pretend. As to the prince, my son, he is of your blood. He is already susceptible of every impression. Brought up amongst you, he can never forget your merit. I have taken care that you shall be provided with money, shoes, and stockings. Fear God, love one another. Write your wants particularly to me, and be assured that you will find in me always a parent as well as a king.”

Poor, disinherited prince! True, indeed, was his father's assertion that his heart was susceptible. One day, some time later, when unable to endure the life of common soldiers, fourteen of these gentlemen had permission, through King James having written to their commander for them to return to Scotland, came to St. Germain's to thank the king. Four of them, who were in ill health, remained there. They were wandering near the palace, and saw a little boy of six years old about to enter a coach emblazoned

* Dalrymple's Memoirs of Great Britain.

with the royal arms of Great Britain. This child was the son of the exiled king, and was going to Marle.

He recognized the emigrants, and made a sign for them to come to him. They advanced, and kneeling down, kissed his hands and bathed them with their tears.

The little prince bade them rise, and with that peculiar sensitiveness often early developed by misfortune, told them "he had often heard of their bravery; he had wept over their misfortunes as much as those of his parents; but he hoped a day would come when they would find they had not made such sacrifices for ungrateful princes."* Then giving them his little purse, containing about a dozen pistoles, he requested them to drink the king's health.

The child had been virtuously trained; in fact, some of the Jacobites were heard to lament "that the queen, his mother, had brought the prince up more for heaven than for earth."

CHAPTER XXIX.

LETTERS FROM ST. GERMAINS.



IN never ending fear lest the king should again be moved to bestow the hand of Florence on one of his Dutch parasites, the time passed drearily on. She often, indeed, marvelled why Queen Mary detained her at her court unless to answer two ends—the one, to ensure a separation from a person she detested as much as she did the exiled queen; the other, to have the hand of a disengaged heiress to bestow on whomsoever of his Dutch favorites William should hereafter feel inclined to favor.

* Amédée Pichot,

The news, too, reached her that Sarsfield and Sir Reginald were both fighting in Flanders, under the French king, and sad as she occasionally was under the continued apprehension of danger to Sir Reginald, or a renewal of tyranny to herself, she would have yielded to a much greater extent but for the lessons and example of her hand-maiden, who never ceased in times of despondency to remind her of the all but miraculous interposition of Providence in her regard, when within but a few hours of being made an unwilling wife. At the same time it not unfrequently happened that she felt an amount of vexation at witnessing the extreme placidity of Grace, whom nothing ever ruffled. She was quite right in conjecturing that it was the result of the lesson she had learned so well whilst passing through that fiery ordeal with the husband whom she had been so eager to obtain.

But there was one very near the queen who was made sorely to suffer by her Majesty, and this was the Princess Anne. The queen was again left by her husband, with difficulties surrounding her at every step. Jacobites, or persons like Grace, were moving about in her own palace, anticipating the restoration of her father, and aware that her sister, with whom she was now at variance, had written a letter to her father, which she had intercepted, in which she had told him "she would fly to him as soon as he could land in any part of Great Britain."

Florence was by nature a gentle, timid woman. When she witnessed the queen's treatment of her own sister her heart involuntarily recurred to the thought of the danger she had escaped, and the certainty there was that in every contest that might await her in the future, the powerful and arbitrary Mary would win the day against herself.

The princess had sent a humble message to the queen,

when, after a time, fraught with much suffering, a child was born to her, but who expired almost immediately.

If the princess thought her situation, seriously ill as she was, and grieving over the loss of her child, would move her sister, she was doomed to be mistaken. She never asked after her health, but seemed as if she only sought her for the purpose of making an attack upon her conduct concerning the sole cause of their estrangement, the Marlboroughs. She addressed the suffering princess in her usual imperious, harsh tone, telling her "she had made the first step by coming to her, and expected she would make the next by dismissing Lady Marlborough, whose husband was her avowed enemy."

The princess turned pale, and trembling with agitation, told the queen she hoped, at some time or other, the request would appear as unreasonable to her Majesty as it then did to herself.

Hard and inflexible as was her nature, she was struck, it may be, with somewhat of remorse, for she said in the presence of Florence, on her return to Kensington :

"I am sorry I spoke as I did to the princess, who had so much concern on her at the renewal of the affair that she trembled and looked as white as her sheets."

Those words she regretted having spoken were the last Mary ever uttered to her sister.

Meanwhile weeks and months passed away. Behind the scenes as she was in Mary's court, Florence learned wisdom with each recurring day, seeing as she did how very little wealth and exalted rank can purchase in the way of happiness and content. She knew that the mind of the usurping queen was a prey to many cares—treachery often at the council table, unfaithfulness in the husband whom she almost adored, and rumors ever and again of those risings

in favor of her unfortunate father—which formed the terror of her whole reign; whilst towards the princess the most utter estrangement continued during the latter years of her life.

On one evening, many months after her long letter had been received by the ex-queen, the usually impassable features of her handmaiden wore an expression of pleasure. She advanced to meet her mistress with a package in her hand, saying, at the same time, in an under tone, “I have seen Father Lawson; these papers are from Mrs. Whitely.”

The first enclosure contained a few lines from Sir Reginald. She opened it eagerly, and read as follows :

I repeat my former assertion, though, Heaven knows, with a sore, despairing heart. My fortunes are ruined, I am landless, homeless, a beggar on the face of the earth, and will not do you, my beloved one, such injury as to hold you to your troth. Forget that I ever existed. I ought to have began this letter with informing you that the gallant and brave defender of Limerick, Lord Lucan, has received a mortal wound at the battle of Landen. He lingered a few days, and then expired in my arms. The name of Sarsfield will be held in honor and veneration by Irishmen in ages yet to come, as a pattern of all that should distinguish the character of a soldier and a man of honor.

“The last of my kinsfolk, then, is no more,” thought Florence, with a sense of the desolation one experiences when aware that we stand alone in the world, with not a soul on earth that can claim that blood relationship which, alas, that it should be so, does not always form, as it ought to do, the very strongest bond between man and his fellow man. Of that, young as she was, she had had practical proof in the conduct of the queen’s own family.

As a relative, Florence knew but little of the gallant Lord Lucan, but she had been accustomed to think of him with a sense of gratified pride, and a feeling of gladness that

she could claim relationship with a man whom his greatest enemies spoke of as of unsurpassed bravery and unflinching honor. His conduct at Limerick attested the latter in a perhaps unexampled degree; for when help was at last at hand, he refused to profit by it, because he had pledged his word to the followers of William.

The letter from the queen began as follows :

Another Autumn has passed away. Shall I ever, my dear child, clasp you in my arms again ?

It is now four years since we parted, and if the merciful God has sent us both trials, it has pleased Him to carry both yourself and your fond Mrs. Whitely safely through them. At present we are all in good health, God be thanked. The king continues to load us with his benefits, and with countless marks of friendship. Every fresh proof fills us with renewed gratitude. Whilst writing on this subject, do you remember, my child, that he promised to grant our Rose, as he termed you, any favor she might beg of him hereafter. It occurs to me that he might be willing to render you a little service in the affairs of a certain person whose disposition and affection is unalterable, but who is, alas, too proud to marry, and thus hold you to your engagement under present circumstances.

The remembrance of the sad and destitute condition of these brave gentlemen, who have made themselves poor and destitute, and who have given up everything for us, fills us with the most poignant grief, and troubles us far more keenly than our own calamities.

Farewell, *ma mignonne*. I never cease to pray for you, as for myself, that God may fill our hearts with His holy love. We may be satisfied with all else that may happen to us if we possess this. I may add that I was much interested in the account you gave me of your attendant. God has given you a great mark of His goodness, my child, in placing such a person near you. Burn this when read; and, once more, farewell.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALONE WITH RECORDS OF OTHER DAYS.

DO you really feel worse, madam?"

This enquiry was put to the queen by Florence in a tone of anxious consideration on the evening of the 20th of December, 1694.

"Very much worse, child, indeed, though the king does not like to hear me say it. I feel ill, seriously ill."

The end was drawing nigh; that end which levels all distinction, when peer and peasant, the crowned head and the beggar, are at last equal.

Did Mary entertain a presentiment that this was to be her last? Her conduct on the night following the day in question would lead posterity to believe that she did.

She always had a high, fresh color, so she had on this day in question. She did not look ill, and the two ladies who were in the room with our heroine when this conversation took place, were loth to believe that her Majesty's indisposition were other than trifling. Indeed, she had never been in her usual health or spirits since about three weeks ago, when the service at Whitehall came to a full stop in consequence of Archbishop Tillotson who was officiating in the queen's presence, being struck with apoplexy, he never spoke again, but died in a few days.

Like many ladies in our own time, Queen Mary was apt to be obstinate in the remedies she used when unwell. Vainly had a faithful physician warned her against the use of a spirituous cordial, which she was accustomed to swallow in large doses. She partook of it on this occasion, and shortly afterwards became much worse.

For a short time Florence was alone with the queen, and

many thoughts passed through her mind, connected with her own presence in the palace. She had been endeavoring to rally the queen's drooping spirits to the best of her power, and the latter seemed to have fallen asleep, and ceasing to talk, Florence fixed her gaze on the full face with that high complexion, and the large corpulent figure of the queen—her size had become such as is rarely seen in a woman—still in the prime of life. Suddenly the queen opened her eyes, she was *not* asleep as Florence had imagined, but was thinking with closed eyes, probably, on the more youthful personage beside her, whom partly from whim, and partly from interested motives, she had for some four or five years monopolized to herself in a species of honorable captivity. Suddenly Mary exclaimed in a hard, abrupt tone, which made Florence start:

“What are you thinking of, what made you stop so suddenly?”

“I believed you were asleep, madam, and—”

“Yes, very well,” interrupted the queen, “I will not press you too closely, instead of insisting on your telling me your thoughts; you shall hear what mine were; I was thinking of you.”

“Of *me*, madam,” said Florence in a tone of astonishment.

“Yes, I was analysing the reasons which had made me constitute you one of my maids of honor. I was thinking of a terrible night three years since when you saved my life; also, of your conduct at the time the king had decreed that you should marry that unfortunate Count, you very rashly contested the point at the time, but I was well satisfied with your conduct later. Tell me child, in case I should die, is there any request you would like granted. I do not know *why*, but I feel a passing sympathy for you

at times, and so put it to account of the circumstances I have mentioned."

A strange feeling kept Florence for a moment silent ; she was aroused by the queen demanding if she had heard what she had been saying to her.

"Yes, madam, but I was perplexed to know how to answer your Majesty. This is but a passing illness, let us hope, *why* should you think you will die?"

"I am mortal, am I not," said the queen ; "fetch me a pen, and ink, and paper, from my *escrétoire*."

With an expression of unfeigned wonder in her face, Florence assisted the queen to rise, though she still maintained a reclining position ; she was about to write when, as if a sudden thought occurred to her, she paused, saying :

"There is a person acting as your maid ; how very ugly she is ; she has known better days, as the phrase goes, and I fancy she is attached to you ; do you like Grace Wilmot ? Tell me briefly, child, for I am very faint and must lie down again speedily."

"Yes, madam, I like Grace Wilmot very much," was the reply.

Then Mary grasped the pen, and paused for one moment as if to clothe her ideas in words ; then the royal hand passed hurriedly over the paper. When she had finished writing, she again laid down, whilst she requested Florence to light her a taper, and bring her wax and a seal. She then folded the paper together in form of a letter, sealed it and wrote upon the cover.

"To be delivered to the king in case of my death."

"If I recover from this illness, you will return this letter to me *unopened* ; if I die, you will deliver it to the king within a *day* of my decease. Be careful to do as I tell you, as you value what you may consider your own happiness."

A faint smile crossed the queen's face as she noticed the look of bewilderment on that of Florence, who replied not without emotion, that she hoped the day of her death might be long distant, and that she trusted to return it to the queen in a few days.

"*Remember*, not a *word* is to be said in connection with that to any breathing being; put it carefully aside, child, and now leave me to myself. I do not want you again to-night."

Returned to her own room, Florence carefully locked the queen's letter in her cabinet, and lost in a maze of the wildest conjecture, for the paper certainly concerned herself. She was still sitting by the fire, abstracted and thoughtful, when Grace entered the room; the latter was at no loss to divine that something more than usual had occurred during her interview with the queen, but delicacy and respect kept her silent.

Coupled with the remarks the queen had previously made, Florence was at no loss to surmise that she had touched the heart of the queen, in so far as it was at all accessible, but never dreamed of the matter the papers really contained.

She had gone to rest at her usual hour, but had lain awake till after the palace clock had struck the hour of twelve, vainly trying to guess the purport of those hurriedly written lines.

When she at last fell asleep, all was silent as the grave, not the faintest sound was to be heard.

She awakened, startled by a noise; of that she was certain, for her heart beat and she started as one is apt to do whose sleep is not naturally disturbed.

The beams of the wintry moon streamed through the curtains, partially drawn aside at the foot of the bed. The

room was flooded with its strong light ; she could see around it, all was perfectly still and safe.

But again she heard that noise, and again she fears, for she remembers the night at Whitehall.

A few moments more and a deep sigh breaks upon the dead stillness around, and then she hears the rustling of paper, and becomes aware that some one whose chamber is very close to her own, is keeping watch that cold December night. And, moreover, that their occupation must needs be the examination and destruction of papers of importance. Then Florence began to think what rooms were between her own and the queen's bed-chamber, and she remembered that the bed-room gave admittance to a private closet used by the queen, and that the corner of her own room, near the head of her bed, must run parallel with this very closet.

A thrill of horror ran through her veins, and she still listened attentively, hoping she might hear the murmur of the king's voice or some other person's. It seemed so very terrible to her to think, that ill as she was, the queen was sitting up alone, forgetting the folly of such a step. She had partially thrown aside her bedclothes with the idea of going to the queen's room and urging her to go to rest, and allow her to perform the work on which she was engaged.

Again a deep sigh, and a moan as of a soul in anguish, as it looks over the records of the past. It is followed by the sound of paper being crushed or torn ; she hears, too, the queen's low cough, and shudders, for she knows well what her occupation must be that long cold winter's night.

She was alone, quite alone ; of that Florence was now perfectly convinced ; nor is it likely was she at all incorrect in surmising that the queen's occupation was that of destroying important papers connected with her usurpation of the crown.

Florence remembered having heard the late king speak of the pains he took the night before he left Whitehall, to preserve every document or paper which could inform posterity as to his conduct, whilst his more fortunate and guilty daughter was evidently destroying with her own hand, every paper that could speak with certainty of her own personal history.

“ She *does* then entertain an idea that she will not live,” said Florence ; “ and how terrible must such an occupation be.”

One, two, and three o'clock struck, and though she fought against it for a long while, Florence at last fell asleep, but not for long. She dreamed she was sitting with the queen looking over old letters ; old letters that had passed between herself and the Princess Anne, when they were villainously plotting about their best of fathers. Old letters from her father to herself, old records of the times forever gone, in which she had taken so prominent a part. Having taken which, if she would retrace *one* step, she could not any more than that the dead can come to life again. And the queen sat opposite to her, looking, as perchance she really did look, as she *must* have looked on that terrible night, unless she was more than human, for the fever of death was even then, be it remembered, coursing madly through her veins. One after another, one after another, she glances at those old letters and documents, then tears them, or crushing them in her hot hands, throws them beneath the stove, watching the blue flame play over them, with a smile of infinite satisfaction at the thought that she has robbed posterity of much it would have liked to know.

One after another, have rolls of papers been opened, patiently scanned, and the greater portion of them com-

mitted to the flames. And Florence in her vision of the night, sees she grows weary of her task ; she leans forward, pressing the throbbing head with the hot hand, and says to herself : “ Three hours and not yet done,” for the crowing of the cock in a distant farm-yard, tells the unhappy queen how long into the night, or rather the morning, her watch has extended ; and Florence fancies she hears her say, “ and if I die now it was all done, but for *six short years* of restless ambition.”

She awakened at first scarcely conscious till a smothered exclamation, alike of bodily and mental suffering, followed by a sound as if the unhappy occupant of the adjoining cabinet were sobbing violently, burst upon her ear. All was then perfectly quiet. The dream of Florence, you see, was but the recitation of what she had heard whilst she was awake. It was hard to think the sight, if mortal eyes could have beheld it, were one whit less pitiful than she had dreamed it to be. If you bear in mind what such a sight would be to you, if death were coming on with rapid strides ; and if earnest to destroy records of your past life, instead of the rest so necessary, such occupation as I have described was yours, and if you closed it too, as Mary did with a letter to her boorish, brutal husband, reproaching him with his love for the notorious Elizabeth Villiers. She had sinned very deeply in her idolatrous love of him, and this was the last letter she ever wrote, endorsing, “ Not to be delivered except in case of my death,” then she locked it up in an ebony cabinet, where, of course, it was found after all was over.

Now it very probably was this letter she was writing, when all was still beyond the heart-rending sobs Florence had overheard, for there was no more rustling of papers, and a very little time afterwards, after the clock had struck

four, she heard the queen pass into the adjoining bed-chamber, and you may suppose that Mary was worse, as she really was after such a watch as this. The following day she was declared to have the small-pox; think, I beg you, how her previous night had been spent.

Florence, with the other ladies of the court, wondered much what steps the Princess Anne would take (of course I need not tell you she said nothing of what she knew respecting the queen's frame of mind on the previous night).

The princess did her duty; she was ill and confined to a couch; nevertheless, she sent a message to her sister entreating her to allow her the happiness of waiting on her. She would, notwithstanding the condition she was in, run any hazard. The message was delivered to her Majesty, and the messenger sent back with word that "the king would send an answer the next day."

No kind sisterly message was returned; no reconciliation could have been desired. Have we not seen all along that Mary's heart was almost dead to human feeling except for her husband? And even to him she left a letter of rebuke.

It happened the next day that Florence was with two other ladies in the queen's bed-chamber; the queen was sinking fast into unconsciousness, when Lady Fitzharding, who undertook to express to all the concern of the Princess Anne, forced herself into the queen's bed-chamber; the dying queen gasped out one word "Thanks." That single word was, indeed, all she was able to utter.

At length a terrible erysipelas spread itself over the queen's face, and a frightful carbuncle settled immediately over the heart. The king was in despair, he ordered his

camp-bed to be placed in the chamber of his dying consort, and remained with her night and day.

She received the communication that she was dying with calmness, said, "that she had wrote her mind on many things to the king," and spoke of the escreteire which he would find in her closet; and avoided giving herself or her husband the tenderness a final parting might have caused to them both. This idea is, however, much at variance with the rebuking letter she wrote to him a few nights since in her closet.*

After receiving the Sacrament, she composed herself solemnly to die. She slumbered some time, but said her soul was not refreshed by it and that nothing did her good but prayer. Once or twice she tried to speak to the king, but could not go through with it. For some hours she lay silent, then when she spoke she wandered very wildly and her hallucinations led those who were around her to believe that there was something still upon her mind.

"I have something to tell the Archbishop; leave me alone with him," said the queen, and the room being immediately cleared, Tennison awaited in breathless impatience, the expected communication.

He afterwards said that the queen's mind was wandering, "she had fancied Dr. Radcliffe, her Jacobite physician, had put a Popish nurse upon her, and that she was lurking behind a screen. One who lived in the time of the queen on speaking of her last moments uses these words.

†" But whether she had any scruples relating to her father, and they made part of her discourse with Tennison, and that arch-divine took upon his own soul the pressures

*Burnett's History of His Own Times.

† Kennet.

which, in those weak unguarded moments might weigh upon hers, must now remain a secret until the last day."

At that most solemn hour between night and morning, the spirit of the queen went forth, without one word of reconciliation or remorse with regard to her injured father, either to ask his forgiveness or to express sorrow for her conduct.

Father Lawson was yet lingering in the vicinity of the palace when the queen's death took place. There were others, besides Florence and her handmaiden, secretly of the proscribed faith, and by one of these, the tidings was conveyed to James, who though he would not put himself in mourning for her death, shut himself up in his apartments and refused all visits. His horror was great on finding that one he had loved so dearly had expired without sending him the slightest expression of sorrow, at the misery she had been the means of causing him.

To the great honor of that primate, Dr. Ken, who had been Mary's chaplain in Holland, we may add, that he wrote indignantly to Tennison respecting his conduct at the queen's death-bed, charging him with not acting up to his position as primate, in failing "to call on the queen to repent on her death-bed of her sins towards her father," reminding him in very strong language of the horror Tennison had expressed to him *of some circumstances in the queen's conduct* at the time of the revolution, affirming that they would compromise her salvation, without individual and complete repentance.

Three times had the king swooned when word was brought him that the queen was no more. He persisted in remaining at Kensington, and as no one dared intrude on his grief, Florence was at a loss how to convey to him the letter of the queen; chance, however, threw her in his way.

The queen's funeral had taken place, and she was beginning seriously to think of addressing herself to the Princess Anne, when, wandering down one of the galleries of the palace, she met the king advancing toward her; to retreat was impossible. He would have passed her by, for his head was bent downwards, and he seemed lost in thought.

Her step, however, aroused him, and he seemed about to pass on, when, as if a sudden idea struck him, he paused.

"I will speak of you to the Princess Anne," he said, and was walking on, when summoning courage by the thoughtfulness he had expressed, she knelt down, and gracefully presented to him the dead queen's letter. A flush akin to anger, it might be, passed like a momentary shadow across his countenance; and in somewhat harsh tones, he exclaimed:

"You may go."

She scarcely understood his meaning, and rising, and turning as to leave the gallery, looked enquiringly in his face.

"You may go," he repeated; "go from here; go where you will, with your maid; read, and go quickly."

Her eyes fell on the few lines the dying queen had written, and which, passing on without further word or comment, the king left in her hand. They ran thus:

"In remembrance of my maid of honor, Florence O'Neill, having saved my life during the fire at Whitehall, and also of her submission to our will respecting the overtures of marriage from the Count Von Arnheim, I beg that you will allow her to leave the palace, with her maid, whenever she pleases to go, wheresoever she shall see fit; and as she has now turned her twenty-first year, that she may have the full and entire management of her late uncle's property, as well as of the Irish estates inherited from her aunt, Catherine O'Neill.

MARIE R.

Florence was alone in the gallery, and, for two or three

minutes after reading the paper, remained in the position in which William of Orange had left her. Joy is near akin to grief in her manifestations, and her tears fell abundantly over the paper as she proceeded to her own chamber, her mind busily weaving a thousand delightful images by the way.

When she reached her rooms she immediately summoned Grace. When that imperturbable hand-maiden made her appearance she was seated with that small piece of paper open on the table, her hands clasped, and an expression of joy on her countenance.

"Grace," she said, "I am going to France. Will you accompany me thither?"

"To France, madam," said the astonished woman, and her eyes fell on the open letter of the queen.

"I have permission of the king. A voice from the grave, which he dared not refuse, has spoken to him. You may read if you wish," and, with a something of reverence, she put the dead queen's letter in her attendant's hand. You must make your election, Grace, and make it quickly."

"It is already made, madam," said Grace. "I love the queen better just now than I ever loved her in her lifetime. When shall we go?"

"Pack up my clothes and books at once, Grace; let us go as speedily as possible."

Then Florence withdrew to her private apartment, and you may be quite sure that for some little time she felt like one in a dream, dazed, bewildered. Should she go straight to St. Germain's? Oh, no; she should act upon a hint the Queen Mary Beatrice had given her. She should seek out King Louis, and beg him to redeem his word; because you will please to remember that when she met the king at Marly, more than four years since, he had told her he would grant any boon she at any time wished to ask of him.

I shall not say what boon she meant to ask, but her thoughts might be thus construed into words.

"I shall go to Paris, and then enquire where King Louis holds his court. If I can get speech of Madame de Maintenon I will, because the king will refuse her no favor she asks of him, though he has already passed his word to me to grant whatever boon I solicit. I shall then go to St. Germain. How surprised they will all be to see me again; and *he*, to whom I have been so long betrothed, what will *he* say when I give him the message I am sure to take him from King Louis."

Do not blame her, too, that when her soliloquy was ended, her tears fell to the memory of Queen Mary. How little did she think that the queen, on that morning her hand had traced those lines, was thinking *how* she should at least remedy one wrong. She had decided on speaking to her husband, as it were, from the grave. Thus she secured to Florence her property, as well as her freedom. Probably when she begged her so earnestly to give the king the paper the day after her death, the thought may have occurred to her that permission would be refused, if time were allowed to pass over, so as for the wound, occasioned by her loss, to heal up before the request was made.

There was not small surprise evinced by the ladies of the court at the departure of Florence; but with persons of greater importance, even as with Mary herself, she speedily passed out of the minds of those amongst whom she had moved.

Half fearing to put herself in the way of the king, and yet not liking to leave the palace without craving an audience, she begged one of the ladies in attendance on the Princess Anne to ask if she might have an interview with him. The king's boorish and uncouth message was worthy of himself:

"Tell her I do not want to see her."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE KING'S PLEDGE REDEEMED—ST. GERMAINS.

WELL was it for Florence O'Neill that she was able to be chaperoned into France by one as staid and faithful as Grace. The young lady, as we have intimated, by no means intended to visit St. Germain's first. It was not her intention to go thither till she had first armed herself by receiving the boon concerning which she was about to throw herself at the feet of the French king. Perhaps she was not unconscious that she was performing a rather daring feat in being under no protection, when presenting herself at the court of the gallant monarch, beyond that of Grace, a woman of middle age, whom Florence had insisted on raising from the humble calling of an attendant to the position of a friend and companion, and which, by her education and good breeding, she was eminently calculated to fill.

On arriving in France she heard that the king was holding his court at Marly, and she immediately proceeded thither. She had resolved, first, to gain an interview with Madame de Maintenon. She knew well that that lady was the bosom counsellor of the king. Moreover, under her patronage, notwithstanding her doubtful rank, she should present herself before Louis with less diffidence.

It was more than four years since that pleasant summer day, when she had accompanied the king and queen to Marly. The place, and persons, and times, are altered now.

Then roses, and lilies, and verbena, and sweet-scented heliotrope cast their balmy perfume on the air, and the fields and hedges were gay with the wild violet and poppy. Now, the hand of winter was spread over the scene; the hoar

frost glistened on the trees and porticoes, and the miniature lakes of Marly were covered with a sheet of ice.

She, too, is changed; she had sprung from girlhood to womanhood; her almost matchless beauty matured, but in no degree lessened. Others have changed; she will find traces of the pressure of its hand on those from whom she has been separated, even as they will no longer behold in her the Florence of four years since. Times, too, have altered. She had smiled when Louis had promised to grant her any boon she might wish for, wondering, in the proud recklessness of youth, what she could ever want to ask for herself in the way of a boon from Louis.

She was at Marly now as a suppliant to beg of the gallant king to make good his word. And why? Two fair estates are hers. Joyfully would she fling it all at the feet of him to whom she was betrothed; but well she knows his haughty temper, and that he will never complete that betrothal by marriage, unless he can retrieve his shattered fortunes.

“And you are the *petite* O'Neill, whom I have heard *Madame la Reine* deplore the loss of so bitterly,” said Madame de Maintenon, in a tone not unmingled with surprise, as she fixed her eyes on the somewhat stately and elegant lady before her.

“You must be pleased to remember, Madame, that four years have passed since I left St. Germaines.”

“Ah, *c'est vrai*, I had forgotten; the girl is now a woman.”

“And lovelier far than when she was a girl, *mon Dieu*,” said the king, coming forward from an inner apartment, in spite of the significant glances of Madame, who knew well he was near at hand. “My cousins at St. Germaines,” he added, “will scarce recognize the runaway O'Neill again.”

“Oh, sire, I am indeed unprepared to meet your

majesty," said Florence, rising, with a blush upon her cheek; and Louis put out his hand to raise her from the kneeling attitude she had assumed.

"Never fear, maiden," he replied, "I passed my word as a king that I would grant any boon you should ask of me in the day of trouble or distress. What *is* the trouble, my fair O'Neill? Let me know, and I will right it for you."

A deep blush again suffused the face of Florence. She had not counted at all on meeting the king on this first visit. She had hoped to ingratiate Madame de Maintenon in her favor, and tell her story to her first, when the delicate portion of her visit would have been half got over.

At length she, with difficulty, stammered out:

"Oh, sire, I know not how to prefer my petition. It was to ask a boon for a brave English gentleman whom William of Orange has outlawed, and whose estates he has confiscated and—"

"Aye, prithee, what then?" interrupted the king. "Art pleading for a mate for yourself, maiden? We must see you do not wed a landless knight."

"Your majesty," replied Florence, blushing yet more deeply, "I have lands and estates in abundance, being heiress to the last of my kindred; but, alas, he to whom I am betrothed has lost his all, and it is for him I beg the performance of your kingly promise. If your majesty would allow him to fight under your standard, and—"

"Fair Florence," said the courtly monarch, interrupting her, "the boon I have promised you I will not fail to pay. Are you pleading for a certain Sir Reginald, who, on account of his poverty, shrinks from redeeming his troth with a maiden of good lineage till he can make good his ruined fortunes?"

"It is in behalf of Sir Reginald St. John that I crave the fulfilment of your majesty's promise," answered Florence.

"Assuredly I will redeem it; nay, I *have* redeemed already to the full the promise I gave four years since. Rest content, Florence, I knew your secret before you came hither. The good queen has already mentioned your betrothal to me. But yesterday Sir Reginald was appointed to a command under one of my brave marshals."

Florence would have spoken her thanks, but could not. She was moved to tears at the delicacy with which *le grand monarque* had conferred the appointment.

"Nay, weep not, Florence," he said; "I am rejoiced I have had it in my power to serve you, and by so doing forward the nuptials of a brave gentleman with a fair and virtuous lady. Now, to turn to other matters. When do you return to St. Germain's?"

"As soon as possible, your majesty. I am most anxious again to see my dear mistress."

"Let the young lady partake of refreshments, madam," said the king, turning to Madame de Maintenon, "and a carriage shall be in readiness a little later to convey you to St. Germain's, fair Florence," added Louis, touching her forehead with his lips.

It was drawing towards the close of the winter afternoon ere our heroine arrived again at the well-remembered chateau of St. Germain's.

The king and his consort were together, seated in the closet of the former. The light of the winter afternoon was fading away, but the bright, red glow of a large wood fire fell upon the antique panelings of green and gold, and gave a cheery appearance to the chamber and its surroundings. Beside the fire sat the queen, her hands folded on her lap. Time had left its traces on her fair face, but

withal there was an expression of patience and resignation that told she had learned to place her hopes on other than an earthly kingdom.

Beside a small table, in the centre of the room, sat the king, his countenance more impaired by sorrow than by years. He had not yet recovered from this second scar, the grief which his daughter's death had caused him, dying, as she did, unreconciled, and without sending him one kindly word.

Suddenly there was a slight tap at the door, and the page announced a lady.

Tall, and veiled, and slender, a female form advances; but uncovering her face as she approaches the queen, she throws herself at her feet.

King James started at the intrusion. He had not recognized the visitor. For a moment, too, the queen was equally lost in surprise, but the tones of the voice are remembered, as, exclaiming, "My dear, dear mistress," Florence pressed the queen's hands to her lips, and bathed them with her tears.

For a moment Mary Beatrice could not speak. Then she pushed back the golden locks that clustered over her brow, saying:

"Yes, it is herself, her very self; but yet how changed, the girl has become a woman, but it is the face of Florence still."

"Now, Florence, Florence, is it possible," said the king, good-humoredly, rising, as she drew near. "At last, then, you have got quit of the court, and come back like a weary bird to its nest. I wonder not that the queen did not know you; you are changed, very changed," and an admiring gaze it was that he fixed upon Florence, while his queen overwhelmed her with enquiries as to how she had at

last got away from Kensington, the manner of her route to St. Germain, and many other questions.

Of course her replies involved making the queen acquainted with the visit to King Louis. It was a step rather at variance with the notions of the queen that Florence should have visited the king's court alone. But she was safe at St. Germain, and had faced and braved dangers greater than that of making *detour* in her homeward way to pay a short visit to the King of France.

Suddenly pausing the queen rose, saying: "Shall she not see *him* to-night, he will sleep the sounder for it, depend on it."

"No, not till the morning," replied the king, "he has been at Versailles all day, and has probably not returned. Let the child have refreshment and a night's rest, and see St. John on the morrow."

With her own hands Mary Beatrice, who had followed Florence with an attendant into the old room she had occupied years since, then helped to divest her of her travelling garb, asking in a pathetic tone when she had again seated herself, what she thought of the king's appearance.

"His Majesty," said Florence, "looks much older, but then, madam, four years have passed, those years have made an alteration in all of us." She might have added, "the king looks ill, careworn, and depressed."

The queen never left the side of her favorite that evening. Moreover, she was hurried to the royal nursery, to see the infant princess whom James had styled at her birth *La Consolatrice* (because, he said, "she was to console him for the evil conduct of his elder daughters"), and also the bright and blooming Prince of Wales, now a lovely boy of six years old.

It followed, as a matter of course, that Florence spent

the entire evening in the closet of the king. Not only was James and his consort rejoiced to see their *protégée*, again, but she had come from the Court of William and Mary, in which she had spent the four years of her absence. And though James never knew to the day of his death, the extent of the treachery of his daughter Anne, his eyes were opened to much of family cabal to which she had become prey, during her residence at Kensington.

Notwithstanding their disgust they were both amused by the ludicrous account Florence gave them of the boorish conduct of William to herself, at her last interview, as also at the message that most polite king sent to her the day before she left the palace. Indeed, so fond was William of Orange of appreciating to himself the monies of other persons, that there was but little doubt his dislike to Florence was increased by the fact that, after all, he had to let her and her money slip through his fingers. Doubtless, had she remained at the court long enough for the sore occasioned by the queen's death to have healed up, he would not have stood upon any great punctilio as to whether he fulfilled her request or not.

Three years later the pages of history make known to us that the queen Mary Beatrice suffered fearfully from this dishonest propensity of the king to appropriate to himself the money of others. Parliament had agreed to pay a pension of £50,000 per annum to that unfortunate queen, of which she never received a farthing. William deceived the nation, and defrauded the queen; he put the money into his own pocket. That pension might have been obtained at a later date when William and Anne had both passed away. The money might have been reimbursed, but the royal exiles would not, and rightly, stoop to ask for it as subjects.

When Florence first awoke on the following morning, she had some difficulty in comprehending that really she was back again at St. Germain. She had to glance round the old, well-remembered room, and rouse herself thoroughly before she could satisfy herself, that it was not some pleasant dream, the illusion of which was about to be dispelled. I beg you also to bear in mind that there was a person to whom she was, in a manner, already united, and whom she was, of course, very anxious to see once again, whom during the years of their separation she had never forgotten; every moment seemed trebled in duration till she beheld him again; no formal meeting was theirs to be either. The king and queen were to have nothing whatever to do with it. She could not sleep again for very joy though it was yet early; the morning was bright and clear, there was the valley once more, how different the prospect to that of four weary years. She arose, and dressed herself, threw on a heavy furred mantle, and went out to ramble on the terrace, enjoying with the keen relish of one who had long endured a sort of honorable captivity, the cool bracing air, the lovely prospect, notwithstanding it was winter, and above all the blessed consciousness that she was with those whom she loved, and by whom she was beloved.

She paused after a while, leaned against the palisades, and a sense of quiet happiness, to which she had long been a stranger, took possession of her heart.

Absorbed in her own pleasant joyous thoughts, she heard nothing, saw nothing, regarded not the lapse of time, knew not that the fond eyes of Queen Mary Beatrice, attended by another to whom she was dearer far than life itself, were looking down upon her from a window of the chateau, and was still looking far away into the future, weaving bright dreams of wedded happiness, picturing to herself

how a certain chateau, at present vacant, in the valley, might be redecored, and of all the good she with her wealth might be able to do for the poor emigrants, when the words,

“ Florence, my betrothed,” fell on her ear in the tones of a well-remembered voice, like a stream of music, the melody of which has never been forgotten.

The surprise was too sudden, she would have fallen but for a strong arm outstretched to support her, and then when she recovered, and he grew eloquent in praise of her constancy and truth, and forgetful of all the world beside, they talked over the days that had gone by, and conjured up fair visions of the future, of home ties and joys which Death alone should break.

In the midst of her new found happiness, Florence had not forgotten Grace, the friend to whom she owed so very much, in whose character flourished, by the grace of repentance, those same virtues inherent in the queen.

The packet containing the story of her life, Florence had a year since forwarded to the queen, had of itself been sufficient to introduce her to her notice.

Not very long, you may be sure, were the nuptials of Florence and Sir Reginald delayed. In the Chapel Royal of St. Germain's that ceremony which completed their betrothal was soon celebrated, being fixed to take place immediately after the Easter festivities.

In the middle of the week following Low Sunday, there was a great gathering at the Chapel of St. Germain's. The fond hands of Grace, who looked on Florence as her own child, had dressed the bride's hair, had twined amongst the golden tresses the delicate orange blossom, and arranged the veil, and had decked her in as costly a robe as that which Mary of England had presented her with two years since ; it was the gift of Louis of France.

Eight young ladies, chosen from the most distinguished Jacobite families resident at St. Germain's, acted as bridesmaids, and King James gave the bride away. The French King was also present with Madame de Maintenon and many of the nobles of his court. Without doubt, those who gathered within the Chapel Royal were right in saying there could not be found in the whole realm of France, a lovelier or more virtuous bride, or a braver knight than Florence O'Neill and Sir Reginald St. John.

* * * * *

SEVEN YEARS AFTER.

"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us, consider and behold our reproach." This verse of the Lamentation was sung in the choir of Chapel Royal at St. Germain's, seven years after the marriage of Florence O'Neill.

The words I have quoted touched a chord in the heart of King James, he sank back in the arms of the queen in a swoon.

Many months of weakness and infirmity had brought him to the brink of the grave, the hour so dreaded by Mary Beatrice had at length arrived.

The children of his old age now stand around his bed; before the king receives the rites of the Church, he wishes to counsel and bid them farewell.

The prince first drew nigh, and embracing him with passionate earnestness James spoke to him in these words :

"I am now leaving the world which has been to me a sea of storms and tempests, it being the will of Almighty God to wean me from it by many and great afflictions. Serve Him with all your strength and never put the crown of England in competition with your eternal salvation. There is no slavery like sin, no liberty like His service. If

He in His providence shall see fit to place you on the throne of your royal ancestors, govern your people with justice and clemency. Remember, kings are not made for themselves but for the good of their people. Set before their eyes in your own actions a pattern of all manner of virtues, consider them as your own children. You are the child of vows and prayers, behave yourself accordingly. Honor your mother that your days may be long; and be always a kind brother to your dear sister that you may reap the blessings of concord and unity." The prince gave way to a passionate burst of grief. The little Princess Louisa was then brought, bathed in tears, to her dying father's bedside. She was one of the loveliest of children, and young as she was the intelligent child understood the sorrow that impended over her.

"Adieu, my dear child," said the king after he had embraced and blessed her, "adieu. *Serve your Creator in the days of your youth, consider virtue as the brightest ornament of your sex. Follow closely in the steps of that great pattern of virtue, your mother, who has been, no less than myself overburdened with calumny, but Time, the mother of Truth, will, I hope, at last, make her virtues shine as bright as the sun."

Then the dying king exhorted his servants to lead holy and Christian lives, and after he had received the last Sacraments, he told the curé that he wished to be buried privately in his parish church, with no other inscription than these words, "Here lies James, King of Great Britain."

He died in perfect charity with all the world, and especially named his son-in-law, the Prince of Orange, and the Princess Anne of Denmark, his daughter.

*Life of James from the Stuart Papers

All this while, the poor queen had sunk down on the ground by his bedside. The king said all he could to comfort her, pointing out it was the will of God in this as in all other trials.

The following day Louis of France arrived, alighting at the iron gates lest the noise of the coach driving into the court should disturb the king. James received him as composedly as if nothing were the matter. The sight of the queen's grief was the only thing that disturbed the calmness with which he was passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death; bade those who were near him lead her to her chamber, and then requested that the prayers for a soul departing should be read. The queen, worn out by grief and watching, went softly round by the back stairs, and knelt in a closet, behind the alcove of the bed, where she could hear every word and sigh uttered by the dear object of a love which for twenty-seven years had been the absorbing principle of her existence. The king at last sank into a sort of lethargy, giving, for several days, little consciousness of life, except when prayers were read to him, when, by the expression of his countenance and motion of his lips, it was plain that he prayed also.

The sands of life were ebbing fast when King Louis next entered the chamber of the dying James; for when the former enquired after his health he neither saw nor heard him, and on being roused from his dreary stupor, and told the King of France was there, he opened his eyes with a painful effort, saying, "Where is he?"

"Sire, I am here," said Louis; "I am come to see how you do."

"I am going," said James, "to pay that debt which must be paid by kings as well as their meanest subjects. I give your Majesty my dying thanks for all your kindness to

me and my afflicted family, and do not doubt of its continuance, having always found you good and generous." He then expressed his thanks for the king's kindness during his sickness.

"That is, indeed, a small matter," said Louis; "but I have something to acquaint you with of more importance."

As the king spoke thus the attendants began to retire.

"Let nobody withdraw," said Louis. "I am come, sire, to tell you that whenever it shall please God to call you out of this, I will take your family under my protection, and will recognize your son, the Prince of Wales, as the heir of your three realms."

As the king spoke these words all present threw themselves at his feet. He was the sole hope of the sorrowful court at St. Germain.*

Louis mingled his tears with those which were shed by all around him.

James feebly strove to raise his arms to embrace his royal friend, and strove to speak, but nothing could be heard beyond these words:

"I thank God I die with a perfect resignation, and forgive all the world, particularly the emperor and the Prince of Orange."

"I beg as a last favor," said James, "that no funeral pomp may be used at my obsequies."

"That is the only favor I cannot grant," replied Louis.

"I entreat you, sire," said the dying king, "rather to employ any money you may feel disposed to expend for that purpose for the relief of my destitute followers. I recommend them to your compassionate care, and I beg you, sire, no longer to remain in this melancholy place."

* Life of James II., from Stuart Papers.

The queen had sent for the prince. She brought him herself through the little bed-chamber into that of his dying father, that he might return thanks to his protector. The young prince knelt down and expressed his gratitude to his majesty.

Louis raised and embraced him, promising to supply his father's place.

Never, says his son, the Duke of Berwick, was there seen more tranquillity, patience, and even joy, than in the feelings with which he contemplated the approach of death.

* With much firmness he then took his leave of the queen, bidding her restrain her tears. "Reflect," he said, "I am going to be happy, and forever." Then he bade her write, when he should be no more, to the Princess Anne, to assure her of his forgiveness, and to charge her, on his blessing, to atone to his brother for the injury she had done him.

The end was nigh, his hands began to shake with a convulsive motion, the pangs of death came visibly upon him.

"I beg your Majesty to withdraw," said the Bishop of Autun to the queen; "I am about to pray for a soul in its agony. The sight of your anguish will disturb the serenity God has shed upon the heart of the king."

She consented to tear herself away, but when she kissed his hands for the last time, her sobs roused the king from the lethargy into which nature had sunk.

"Why is this?" said he, tenderly. "Are you not flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone? Are you not part of myself? How is it, then, that one part of me should feel so differently to the other; I in joy, and you in despair? My joy is in the hope I feel that God in His mercy will for-

* Duke of Berwick's Memoirs.

give me my sins and receive me into His beatitude, and you are affected for it. I have long sighed for this happy moment, and you know it. Well, cease then to lament for me ; I will pray for you. Farewell.”*

It was yet twenty-four hours ere the king died. The queen was forbidden again to enter the chamber, though he asked for her each time he awoke ; and, informed of this, she implored so passionately once again to see him, promising not to say anything to agitate him, that they allowed her to approach the bed.

She struggled to assume a feigned composure, but though the film of death was on the eyes of the king, and his ear becoming dead to outward sounds, he perceived the grief of her soul.

“ Do you suffer ? ” she enquired.

“ Yes, because you suffer,” he replied. “ I should be well content if you were less afflicted, or could take some share in my happiness.”

“ Beg of God,” she said, “ to give me the grace of love and perfect resignation to His will.”

They compelled her to withdraw ; not even her best loved friend might approach. She passed the awful interval in fasting, watching, and prayer.

At last the tried and purified spirit of the king had passed away, but none durst venture to break the truth to the queen except her confessor, and even he shrunk from telling her so in direct words, but requested her to join with him in prayer for the king. He began with the words :

“ Subvenite sancti Dei.”

“ O, my God, is it then over,” she exclaimed, throwing herself on the ground in an agony of grief, for she knew that these words commence the office for a soul departed.

*Memoirs of the Duke of Berwick.

“ I exhort you, madam,” said Father Keega, “ to resign yourself to the will of God, and in token that you do so, say *Fiat voluntas tua.*”

“ *Fiat,*” said the unhappy queen, in obedience to her spiritual director. The blow was very hard to bear, for she had till the last moment clung to the hope that the king would recover.

A smile was on the dead face of the king ; the bitterness of death had long been passed. He had requested that his chamber door should be left open, that all who wished might freely enter ; and a flock of French and English, of all ranks and stations, crowded forward.

In compliance with the ceremonial their respective positions exacted, the royal widow went to offer her homage to her boy. “ Sir,” she said, “ I acknowledge you for my king, but I hope you will not forget you are my son.” Then, overpowered by grief, she was carried in a chair from the apartment, and from thence to a carriage, which was to convey her to the Convent of Chaëllot, in the retirement of which place she designed to pass the first days of her widowhood. One hour after her husband’s death, attended by four ladies only, the queen left St. Germain’s for Chaëllot.

The church of the convent was hung with black, and as soon as she neared the convent the bells tolled, and the abbess and the community received her at the convent gate. In silence Mary Beatrice entered the convent, her hood drawn over her face, followed by her ladies, and overwhelmed with grief. The nuns gathered round her, no one spoke, but the abbess kissed the hem of her robe. Some of the sisters embraced her knees, and others kissed her hand, but no one uttered a single word ; their tears expressed their affliction.

without a sigh or a tear, the queen walked into the choir.

and continued in this stupefaction of grief till one of the sisters approached, and, kissing her hand, said, in a tone of admonition, in the words of the royal Psalmist :

“ My soul, will you not be subject to God ? ”

“ *Fiat voluntas tua*,” replied the queen, in a voice broken by sighs. Then advancing towards the choir, she said :

“ Help me, my sisters, to thank my God for His mercies to that blessed spirit who is, I believe, rejoicing in His beatitude. Yes, I feel certain of it, in the depth of my grief.” She then knelt before the altar, and remained a long while in prayer.

The poor queen had taken no food since the previous night, and the abbess, apprehending she would faint, begged her to be carried in a chair, but she chose to walk, saying :

“ My blessed Saviour was not carried up the painful ascent to Mount Calvary, but walked to the consummation of His adorable sacrifice, bearing the burden of His cross for our sins, and shall I not imitate His holy example ? ”

The abbess and two or three of the nuns followed her to her chamber, and begged her to suffer herself to be undressed and go to bed ; but she insisted on listening to more prayers. She could weep no more ; the fountain of her tears was dried up, and its solace denied her.

She sighed often, writes the nun of Chaëllot who preserved the record of this visit of Mary Beatrice, and was seized with fits of dying faintness, but listened with great devotion to the abbess, who knelt at her feet, and read to her appropriate passages from the Holy Scriptures for her consolation. Then she begged the community to pray for the soul of her husband, saying :

“ A soul ought to be very pure that has to appear in the presence of God, and we, alas, sometimes fancy that persons are in heaven, when they are suffering the pains of purga-

tory." At this thought the sealed up fountain of her grief was opened, and she shed floods of tears. Much she wept and much she prayed, but was at last prevailed on to take a little nourishment and go to bed, while the nuns returned to the choir and sung the Vespers for the Dead. Then the Prayers for the Dead were repeated in her chamber, in which she joined, repeating the verses of every psalm, for she knew them all by heart; and begged that a prayer for the conversion of England might be added, observing that for the last twelve years she had been at St. Germain's she had never omitted that petition in her devotions.

At seven the queen sent for her almoner, and after she and her ladies had joined in their usual prayers, she begged the writer of this record to remain with her, for she saw that her ladies in waiting and her *femme de chambre* were worn out with fatigue and watching, and made them go to bed.

The nun's record goes on to say that, without pomp or noise, for fear of agitating the royal widow, the king's heart was brought to the convent. When the king's will was opened it was found that he had directed his body to be buried in Westminster Abbey. It was to await the restoration in the Church of the Benedictines at Paris, whither it was conveyed the Saturday after his death in a hearse, followed by two coaches, in which were the officers of the king's household, his chaplains, and the prior of St. Germain's; and the king's obsequies being duly performed in the convent church, the body was left under the hearse, covered with a pall, in one of the chapels. One after another the hopes of his race faded away, and still the bones of James II. awaited burial.

On the third the queen put on the habit of a widow, and while they were thus arraying, writes the nun of Chaëllot,

her Majesty observed that for the rest of her life she should never wear anything but black; she had long since renounced all vanities, and worn nothing but what was absolutely necessary; "and God knows," she added, "I did not put on decorations except when obliged to do so, or in early youth."

When her melancholy toilet was ended the ladies were permitted to enter to offer their homage, but not a word was spoken; she sat still and motionless, her eyes fixed on vacancy. I had the boldness to place the Crucifix where her regards were absently directed, and soon her attention was centred on that model of patience. After a quarter of an hour I told her the carriage had come. She rose, and said, "I have a visit to make before I go;" and bursting into a passion of tears, she said, "I will go and pay my duty to it. I feel it is here, and nothing shall prevent me from going to it. It is a relic I have given you, and I must be allowed to venerate it." Covered with her veil, and preceded by the nuns, singing the *De Profundis*, she approached the tribune where the heart of her beloved was enshrined in a gold and varmeel vase. She clasped her hands, knelt, and kissed the urn across the black crape that covered it. After a silent prayer she rose, sprinkled it with holy water, and turned as if about to retire, but before she had made four steps she fell into a fainting fit, which caused us some fears for her life. She returned to St. Germain's that evening.

We have seen this with our own eyes, adds the nun. Our Mother and all the community judged it proper that an exact and faithful narrative of the whole should be made, to the end that it might be kept as a perpetual memorial in our archives, and for those who may come after us.

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A little distance from the palace of St. Germain's stood a chateau; it was embosomed in a flowery dell; the grounds which extended around it were cultivated with great care and taste, and the elegance of its interior was such as to betoken the possession of great wealth in its owners.

A lady about thirty years of age, but in the prime of woman's beauty, and dressed in the deepest mourning, is making her way through the valley to the chateau. Two lovely children—a boy of six years old, and a little golden-haired girl of three—hasten to meet her, accompanied by a person of middle age, who, from love of those children, has made herself their nurse. She is plain, very; not a soft line is there in her rugged features; and yet, in the eyes of those little ones, she is endowed with every perfection.

Now the beautiful lady has reached the chateau, and she wends her way, followed by her little ones, to a pleasant room, the windows of which overlook the palace of St. Germain's, gilded by the beams of the setting sun.

A gentleman is standing at the window, buried in thought, and, touching him on the arm, she says:

"We have just brought her home; oh, she is very wretched," and her own tears fall fast as she speaks of the queen's visit to Chaëllot.

Reader, the owner of the chateau is Sir Reginald Marshal St. John; the lady is Florence, his wife.

The children listen, and their eyes are full of tears. Ah, the good old king loved little children. They leave our old friend Grace, and run to their parents.

"When I am a man I will fight for our young king," said the boy, "as you did, papa, for good King James."

"Yes, my boy," replied the marshal, proudly patting the boy on the head, "and may God grant his son may be more fortunate than his father."

“ And I, mamma, will be like you,” lisped the tiny Mary Beatrice, clinging to her mother’s dress, “ will be maid of honor to his wife !”

And if our tale of Florence please our readers, hereafter we may tell of the fortunes of her descendants under the last of the Stuart race, gallant Prince Charlie.



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